

***Bolton by Bowland, Gisburn Forest & Sawley Parish Council
Higher Scarloom House,
Holden, Bolton by Bowland
Clitheroe
BB7 4PF***

FAO Mr Stephen Kilmartin
Ribbles Valley Borough Council
Church Walk
Clitheroe
BB7 2RA

14 March 2023

Dear Mr Kilmartin

Subject: Re: Holden Clough Nursery Planning Application 3/2022/0052

Please be advised that Bolton by Bowland, Gisburn Forest and Sawley Parish Council wishes to object to the above application.

The Nursery has re-submitted a previously withdrawn application, 3/2020/0602, for the creation of additional dining space (with external terrace) complete with tropical plant sales area, bakery/deli food sales area, storage, and office facilities.

In the previously submitted application (3/2020/0602), the increase to the internal floor space was stated as being 354sq.m. And, in this resubmitted application (3/2022/0052), the internal floor space has reduced slightly to 345sq.m. Both approximate to a staggering increase of 80% of internal floor space. The applicant states that the proposal is "a relatively small extension" and has no intention of increasing the number of restaurants covers, which, quite honestly, does not make business sense.

Parishioners are deeply concerned that if the Nursery is allowed to develop the additional space, the applicant could reapply in the future to increase covers or for change of use, which would lead to greater footfall and, potentially, lead to an increase the size of the car park, and the subsequent traffic flow.

The Parish Council would like to point out that, to date, the applicant has a history of flouting planning permissions, and, despite them being brought to the attention of the LPA on more than one occasion, little or no remedial action has been taken.

In this application the Nursery is applying for retrospective planning permission for the structure built on at the rear of the original café. This didn't have planning permission and, although it was pointed out to LPA at the time it was being built, it was allowed to remain. In the new application, the Nursery is applying for retrospective approval of this

structure and permission to build a new structure along the eastern and southern sides of the Kitchen Garden.

In the previous application 3/2020/0637, there was a proviso that the Car Park plans were to be implemented in full and maintained in perpetuity. Three years on there is no landscaping in place to screen neighbouring properties, including Holden Chapel, a Grade II listed building, from the 'business end' of the nursery, and no landscaped car park has been created. It has been noted that, very recently, efforts have been made to tidy up the rear of the Nursery but it is submitted this is a token gesture, does not meet the planning permission requirements and is effectively too little too late.

The evidence of the past few years has shown the nursery is not a good custodian of the AONB environment nor a good neighbour to the community that it sits within. Many of the local residents have voiced objections concerning previous planning applications by the Nursery but, the emphasis by RVBC on the promotion of tourism and the creation of rural employment, has repeatedly been allowed to take precedence over any other concern or objection raised.

The Parish Council would strongly suggest that Planning Committee make an unannounced visit to the site and see for themselves the devastation and damage to both the landscape and character to this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Within such an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Natural England states that it must meet the "natural beauty criteria" one of those being that an area must have relative tranquillity, where natural sounds, such as streams or bird song are predominant. In the Parish Council's opinion such likely noise pollution generated by this proposed development would violate these criteria. We respectfully remind RVBC that it must make sure that all decisions have regard for the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty and sounds of this AONB.

With respect to the D&A Statement, the Parish Council have made specific comments in relation to the statements made by the applicant. Please find these attached to the letter.

In conclusion, we respectfully ask that the planning application is refused. Furthermore, the Parish Council firmly believes that a poor decision could set a precedent for a pattern of unsustainable developments in the area.

Yours sincerely

FOR AND ON BEHALF OF BOLTON BY BOWLAND, GIBBURN FOREST AND SAWLEY PARISH COUNCIL

**CATHY HOLMES (MRS)
PARISH CLERK**

Parish council comments in relation to statements made within the D&A

2.8 States “current restrictions on dining numbers are 100 covers within the Garden Kitchen with an additional 40 covers on the terraced area. These numbers will remain, and the proposed development is not designed to increase dining numbers or times of opening from current arrangements.”

Parish Council - On this basis if covers are not to be increased the additional space should not be granted to ensure that no future applications can be made to increase covers and car parking. Otherwise, it give rise to the potential that covers could be increased in future, if the LPA can be persuaded.

2.11 States “the impact of Covid 19 on the business was severe and staff redundancies inevitable. However, the business is recovering with the café re-opening. The customer demographic includes more vulnerable members of the public and safety was and remains paramount since the pandemic. Recognising that customer attitudes have changed in respect of social distancing this application will maintain a less crowded dining environment and ensure customers can feel comfortable and safe.”

Parish Council - Post Covid, the attitudes to social distancing and the need for more space is quickly becoming outdated principles and the hospitality business is increasingly normalising restaurant covers in the need of profits. To use this as an excuse to increase the space seems disingenuous.

2.12 States “as previously explained the development will allow additional space for diners and provide a retail area for specialist plants alongside the proposed bakery which will provide take-out food. This is specifically aimed at the large cycling fraternity who visit the nursery for refreshments. Food can be purchased and consumed without the need to enter the Garden Kitchen. The area is popular with visitors to Gisburn Forest Mountain Bike Centre and a significant number of road cyclists.

Parish Council - The community within Holden have not seen evidence of visitors arriving from the Gisburn Mountain Bike Centre. Gisburn Forest has its own on-site Café. Can the Nursery provide details of the number of visitors they have now and number they expect this to increase to?

3. Supporting a prosperous rural economy

83. Planning policies and decisions states “This proposal is a relatively small extension of previously approved development. The business is an important source of employment in a rural area and contributes to the visitor economy of the area.”

Parish Council - The proposed footprint is a 80% increase which is significant. Ultimately they can only fund such an extension with large increases in footfall and future applications to increase covers. It is also understood that many of the staff employed are not from the local rural area.

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment the planning system states any development should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Whilst the development states “The proposed scheme will have no negative impacts on biodiversity or local wildlife. Living walls are beneficial to pollinators. “

Parish Council - The proposed development does not conserve or enhance the natural environment.

Local Planning Policy
Core Strategy 2008 – 2028 A Local Plan for Ribble Valley

Key Statement EN2 : Landscape

States that the landscape and character of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be protected, conserved, and enhanced. Any development will need to contribute to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area. The development states “*The proposed development is confined within the existing site. The development will have no visual impact on the surrounding area. “*

Parish Council - The development will have a significant visual impact from both the Eastern and Northern sides of the existing site.

Policy DMG2 : Strategic Considerations.

DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CORE STRATEGY - THE DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE ESSENTIAL TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY OR SOCIAL WELL BEING OF THE AREA. The proposed development states “The development is ancillary to the existing business. The proposal is necessary to allow the existing business to respond to current issues and changing consumer habits.

Parish Council -The business already has a café and adequate retail space, and therefore the Parish Council fails to understand why the development is ancillary and necessary - unless the business has the long-term intention of significantly increasing the number of covers/revenues.

Policy DME2 : Landscape and Townscape Protection

Development proposals will be refused which significantly harm important landscape or landscape features. The development states “The proposal has been designed to protect and enhance the landscape within the AONB.”

Parish Council - How does this proposal protect and enhance the landscape? The proposal adds nothing. The current site does not enhance the landscape within the AONB but is literally a “blot on the landscape”. Rather than give any further permissions to the Nursery, RVBC should use its powers to ensure that they enforce past permissions to protect and enhance the area and local community. The site has been allowed by RVBC

through incremental “planning creep”, to be a totally inappropriate development in an AONB and RVBC has prioritised rural employment and the promotion of tourism to the detriment of all other considerations.

Section 6 Conclusions - the applicant states

6.3 The special qualities of the AONB will not be threatened. There will be no impact on the highway network. Neighbour amenity is not affected.

Parish Council - The terrace and Glasshouse extension will adversely impact upon neighbour amenity both in terms of visual impact, visitor intrusion and the noise levels from the open terrace to both the East and Northern boundaries of the site. This is contrary to Natural England’s “natural beauty criteria “. The consistent flouting of previous permissions and environmental regulations should be considered by RVBC.