
21st September 2020

Ms Harriet McCartney,
Planning Office,
Ribble Valley Borough Council,
Church Walk,
Clitheroe BB7 2RA

Dear Ms McCartney,

Planning Application 3/2020/0602 Holden Clough

We feel we have no alternative but to object to the above application for the reasons given below.

- Increasing the floor space by over 80%, including, the extension of both indoor and outdoor dining and kitchen space, will allow for significant increase in dining covers in the future.
- This is in spite of Holden Clough's claim of a "back to roots" policy and assurances that this will not lead to an increase in dining covers in the future.
- Such expansion will increase congestion on the roads and inevitably call for more parking spaces in the future. It would, of course, be possible for RVBC to approve the plan with conditions but history shows that these have been virtually impossible to monitor. Changes of use have been continually applied in the past apparently without intervention.
- To claim that this is called for because of the pandemic is extremely questionable.
- In any case, if approved the expansion would probably not be available until 2021.

We expand on these points:

Trying to understand this rather complex application in great detail has proved very challenging. By delving more deeply into its potential, it is our view that if approved it could have serious future implications for our small hamlet.

Although described in the Submission Statement as "this proposal is a relatively small extension of a previously approved development", the floor space increases from 426 - 780 square metres an increase of over 80%, which I suggest is far from a small extension, it is a huge expansion.

Dining numbers at the moment are 100 coversindoors and 40 outside, which seems more than ample dining space, even allowing for social distancing measures at present in place for restaurants. Other similar nearby establishments are managing this quite well with positive reviews on their website and avoiding redundancies. I question why somehow this has not been possible for Holden Clough.

Although the plan now is to create an increase in dining space both indoors and out, the Submission Statement states:

“These numbers will remain and the proposed development is not designed to increase dining numbers or times of opening from current arrangements”.

Also “Dining numbers will not change and it is not expected that these changes will increase numbers further than those accounted for in the “previously approved applications”.

Not expected is not fixed and does not mean they won’t in the future!

If there is no intention of increasing covers, why then is an extension to the kitchen suddenly required at this time for the same number of covers? One can only speculate.

It is clear that this extension is unlikely to be completed before 2021 and the main thrust for the justification for this application is the impact of the pandemic. It is impossible to predict when and how restrictions will change.

However, when the pandemic is finally over and conditions return to normal the resulting increase in indoors and outdoor dining space will offer the possibility of significantly increasing dining capacity in the future especially with the advantage of a larger kitchen area.

One can only speculate on the functions and events for which planning applications will then be sought by Holden Clough i.e. weddings and larger social gatherings, the list is endless. We have had in the past large and noisy events causing much disruption to residents and traffic conditions.

Parking spaces will be reduced by this application but any future expansion of dining capacity will almost certainly call for more parking. I quote from a letter dated 21st January 2020 from Lancashire County Council in response to the earlier car park extension **“This should not be seen as an invitation or a pathway to further intensification of the site”**.

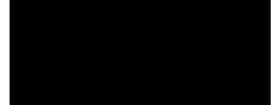
In conclusion, one might be led to believe the pandemic is being used to further the longer-term business interests of Holden Clough. Is it a clever ploy to exploit pandemic restrictions now in place to do this?

This is not illegal but I suggest it could be perceived as an opportunistic move to take advantage of local people and RVBC, both who have more demanding needs to deal with given this present distressing situation and may have insufficient time to explore all relevant facts.

This highly significant and provocative application, which is claimed to be a “relatively small extension”, is one more step on an unending expansion of a business growing out of all proportion to its location within an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

It is for the above reasons we therefore strongly object to this planning application and hope that RVBC will also reject it.

Yours sincerely,

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