

Comments for Planning Application 20/03090/OUT

Application Summary

Application Number: 20/03090/OUT

Address: Car Park East Of Blue Bell Mount Pleasant West Mickley Northumberland

Proposal: Outline application for construction of 3no. detached 4 bedroomed dwellings and re-configuring of existing carpark

Case Officer: Mr Callum Harvey

Customer Details

Name: Professor Francis Jones

Address: 21 Mount Pleasant, West Mickley, Stocksfield, Northumberland NE43 7LP

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: We wish to register our objection to the proposal, on the following grounds:

1. Building on the pub car park would take away a crucial village amenity. The Blue Bell is one of only two pubs bordering Stocksfield, a large village (population 3,011 in the 2011 census) with no pub of its own. Hence the Blue Bell attracts a clientele from a wide area. Customers come from outside the immediate vicinity especially for Sunday lunches - and for special events, which are popular and happen quite often, and which the pub relies on for its viability as a business. Mount Pleasant village is not accessible by public transport: the Hexham-Whittonstall bus route mentioned by the applicant passes 20 minutes' walk from the village at its nearest point (<https://bustimes.org/services/613-hexham-whittonstall>), and the nearest actual bus stop (West Mickley, route 10) is 10 minutes' walk up a very steep path. Hence many of the pub's customers need to drive there - and the smaller car park in the proposed plans would be much too small, especially for special events, thus threatening the pub's viability.

2. The reduced-size car park shown on the plans would not be adequate even for normal pub evenings and lunchtimes. This is because three four-bedroom houses would require parking for 10 cars (3 cars for each of 3 houses + 1 visitor space: <https://northumberland-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/planning/localplan/reg19?pointId=s15409149085671>). Hence much of the pub car park would need to be used by residents of the proposed development.

3. The outcome would be more cars parked along a narrow road (the one road through the village) very close to a blind right-angled corner about 70 metres from the pub and its car park. This would form a traffic hazard, as the road is the key access point from High Mickley and the village itself towards Stocksfield plus the A695 and A69 westbound, so it carries a lot of traffic, including large

agricultural machinery. It would also form a pedestrian hazard. The one existing pavement is narrow and there is already no spare parking space along it. Pedestrian access to the pub and through the village would thus be even more restricted.

4. The status of the pub car park is protected by a restricted covenant, which states it should not be built on.

5. The plot is much too small for three four-bedroom houses. This size of house implies that residents will be families with children - but gardens will be minuscule. The plans supplied with the application appear to show a pavement on both sides of the road adjoining the car park. In fact there is no pavement on the car park side of the road, giving an extra hazard for children living in the proposed houses.

6. Old maps show that the car park is built on a quarry inside a deep dene. A local historian wrote in 1996 (Roger Morris, *A Cuckoo Over Mount Pleasant*, mimeograph), using testimony from older residents, that the quarry and dene were gradually infilled "with domestic waste and bottles" plus "large quantities of waste material from the building of new estates in the area", and that it was covered with a layer of topsoil in the late 1960s to give the present car park and the adjoining field. Some of this waste could well be hazardous - especially the waste building material.

7. The burn which originally had its source in the dene, and ran down it, is now culverted, running just underneath the plot. Building on the car park could produce a significant pollution hazard for the watercourse when it exits the infilled land. The watercourse, together with the nature of the sub-surface infill, also means that the ground of the plot risks being unstable as a base for buildings. This was shown by a landslip at the downhill edge of the infill (in the field adjoining the car park) after heavy rain a few years ago. And the likelihood of intense rainfall events will only increase as the climate crisis gathers pace.

8. The development would significantly alter the character of this village, which is "washed over" green belt, which is important for wildlife as well as for the people living here. The proposed development would replace the open prospect on the eastern edge of the village with very densely-built housing.

9. Echoing other objectors to these plans, we confirm that key details are mistaken. For instance, there is no cycle parking behind the pub (cyclists now use the pub car park), and there is no "level access doorway to the rear of the pub". Other key facts are omitted - for instance, the public footpath flanking the southern edge of the proposed site.

Professor Francis R. Jones and Dr Hanneke Maria Jones
21 Mount Pleasant
West Mickley
Stocksfield NE43 7LP