



EDLESBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

Comments Relating To Planning Application 23/02966/APP 2 Pebblemoor, Edlesborough

This application seeks permission for a change of use of the NMJ Service & MOT Centre in Pebblemoor to a retail convenience store, including associated external alterations to the existing building.

The proposed alterations to the front elevation would involve bricking up all the existing openings other than two of the vehicle entrances and the pedestrian door to the reception area. One of the vehicle entrances would become a full height shop front (presumably glazed) whilst the other vehicle entrance would become a bi-parting entrance door (again presumably glazed). The existing pedestrian door to the reception area would be replaced by a steel security door. This would present quite a stark, unattractive, utilitarian elevation in the street view; even more so than the existing garage building in my opinion.

The intention is for the premises to become a convenience store selling a range of everyday goods including bread, milk, eggs, fruit, vegetables, fresh meat, ready meals, snacks, newspapers, tobacco and magazines. The concern is that those are precisely the same products available from the existing Edlesborough Village Store and Post Office in Summerleys, approximately half a mile away. It is unlikely that there would be sufficient business to support both shops and that one or possibly both businesses would fail as a consequence. (It should be noted that the existing Village Store is already in competition with a similar village store in the adjoining village of Eaton Bray). From the perspective of the local community there would be no gain at best, and possibly the loss of an existing valued local amenity.

Policy EP5 of the Edlesborough Parish Neighbourhood Plan states that *proposals for new retail or commercial development will only be supported within the Edlesborough Village Centre or the Northall Settlement Boundary*. In view of the fact that the premises are not within the Village Centre as defined in the NP, and also because there is already an adequate convenience store within the Centre, there is apparently no justifiable reason for allowing this proposal as an exception to that policy.

The loss of the Service & MOT Centre within the village would constitute a loss of a convenient local facility for villagers. Although it is proposed to relocate the facility at NMJ's Travellers Rest site (reference application 23/02884/APP), that location is well outside the Edlesborough Settlement Boundary. Walking between the village and the new site would be neither safe nor feasible for most customers. It would involve walking along an unlit busy road, much of which is not served by a pavement. Policy

EP10 of the Neighbourhood Plan states that *the retention and enhancement of local community facilities will be supported. Proposals to change the use of an asset must demonstrate that all reasonable steps have been taken to retain its present use and community value as a viable concern.* Whilst the applicant's desire to consolidate the NMJ business on a single site is understandable, and whilst it could have economic and operational advantages for the business, no evidence has been presented to demonstrate that the existing use of the premises is unviable. In fact as already suggested, the proposed use is likely to be less viable than the existing use. The proposal consequently conflicts with Policy EP10.

In view of all the above issues, I cannot recommend that the Parish Council should support this application. I therefore suggest that the Council's response to Buckinghamshire Council should be to OPPOSE the proposal in its current form.

John Wilkinson
Councillor