



EDLESBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

Comments Relating To Planning Application 23/02884/APP NMJ Motorhouse Tring Road Edlesborough

INTRODUCTION

This application seeks permission to erect an additional commercial building on the NMJ Motorhouse site at the Travellers Rest crossroads. The purpose of the building would be to relocate the existing NMJ Service & MOT facility that is currently situated in the centre of the village of Edlesborough. The Travellers Rest site is located well outside the defined Edlesborough settlement boundary.

A parallel application, 23/02966/APP, has also been submitted requesting a change of use of the Pebblemoor premises to a convenience store

DISCUSSION

The Planning and Design & Access statements include a number of claims that are somewhat questionable. These are discussed below:

The proposed building is set back from the highway and will have minimal impact on the surrounding properties.

The building would in fact be very close to Leighton Road and consequently very prominent in the street view. It would also be close to No.1 Leighton Road and with a ridge height of 8.34m, would almost certainly block much of the light from the south facing windows of that property despite its slightly elevated location.

A much more suitable location for the new building would be against the northern boundary but between the existing sales office and valet building. That would be further away from the neighbouring dwellings and far less prominent in the street scene.

The relocation of the Service & MOT facility would result in minimal impact on existing customers.

Relocating a well used facility from the centre of the village to a remote location well outside the settlement boundary with poor accessibility, would have a significant negative impact on village customers. They would be deprived of a valued amenity on their doorstep.

The new location being less than 2km from the existing location is within walking distance for most customers.

Walking between the village and the new site would be neither safe nor feasible for most villagers who probably constitute the majority of customers. It would involve walking along a busy unlit road, much of which is not served by a pavement. The alternative for most customers that need to be able to walk between a service centre and the village would probably be to transfer their business to NG Autos at Sparrow Hall Farm. That facility is just outside the Settlement Boundary, and whilst less convenient, is within feasible walking distance.

The existing customers would not be inconvenience by the relocation because the site is linked to the village by a regular bus service. This will enable customers to easily travel to and from the garage whilst their car is being serviced.

What the Statement omits to point out is the infrequency of the bus service. The Service Centre is open between 8am and 5:30pm and yet the last bus in the afternoon from the village to the Travellers Rest before closing time is currently at 3:45pm.

Freeing up the Pebblemoor site will provide space for additional valuable retail development for the benefit of local residents.

As the existing Edlesborough Village Store & Post Office sells the entire range of products that the proposed Pebblemoor store would provide, there would be very little benefit to the local community. In fact it's very unlikely a village the size of Edlesborough could support two convenience stores and there would be a strong likelihood that one or possibly even both stores could fail as a consequence. If that were to happen it would be to the disbenefit of local residents.

PLANNING POLICIES

NPPF

Paragraph 84 requires the retention of accessible local services. As already mentioned, the loss of the current accessibility is contrary to that policy.

VALP

Policy I3 states that *The Council will resist proposals for the change of use of community buildings and facilities for which there is a demonstrable local need, unless the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location.*

The existing Service & MOT Centre is regarded as a valued community facility and whilst the replacement facility would be equivalent in terms of quantity and quality, it would not be in a suitable location.

Edlesborough Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Policy EP1 states that *development on land outside the defined Edlesborough Settlement boundary will not be supported other than for rural housing exception schemes, uses that are suited to a countryside location such as appropriate leisure and recreational uses, or community right to build schemes. Well designed proposals for employment,*

agriculture or forestry and tourism that may help the rural economy will be supported. The site is outside the Settlement Boundary and would not add any additional employment that would help the rural economy because the NMJ employment already exists at the present site. Any additional employment at the Pebblemoor site would be dependent on the success of the proposed convenience store which, as already mentioned, is somewhat dubious.

Policy EP5 states that *proposals for new retail or commercial development will only be supported within the Edlesborough Village Centre or the Northall Settlement Boundary.* The Travellers Rest site is outside the Village Boundary and although the Pebblemoor site is located in the geographic centre of the village, it's not within the 'Village Centre' as identified on the NP maps (inset D).

Policy EP10 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.* The Service & MOT garage is regarded as a local community facility and no evidence has been provided to demonstrate that it is no longer viable at the present location.

CONCLUSION

The positioning of the proposed building in the north east corner of the site would probably have an adverse impact on the amenity of No.1 Leighton Road. A more suitable location would be between the existing sales office and valet building.

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, the relocation of the Service & MOT garage from the centre of the village to a more remote location would result a reduction of local facilities readily available to Edlesborough residents. Unless it can be demonstrated that the suggested re-development of the existing Pebblemoor site is a viable proposition, and would provide additional facilities that would significantly outweigh the loss of the garage as far as the majority of residents are concerned, then I don't consider that we can support the application.

I therefore recommend that the Parish Council should OPPOSE the application in its current form.

John Wilkinson
Councillor