

Coniston Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Coniston Parish Council Held on Zoom at 7.00pm on Monday, 26th April 2021

Present: Councillor T Coward (Chair)
Councillors – J Buller, A Thompson, J Airey, C Sargeant
Clerk – M Dearnley

County Councillor M Brereton
15 members of the public

Minute Number		Action By
198/2021	<p>Apologies</p> <p>RESOLVED: To accept apologies from Councillors Troughton and Hall.</p>	
199/2021	<p>Requests for Dispensations</p> <p>Councillor Coward declared that as her holiday cottage is let through Mr Johnston’s letting agency that she has an established business relationship with the applicant. It was agreed that she would Chair the meeting to ensure efficient conduct of business, but take no part in deliberation, voting or decision-making.</p>	
200/2021	<p>Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of Agenda items</p> <p>All Councillors as Custodian Trustees of the Coniston Institute and Ruskin Museum.</p>	
	<p>Planning Application: 7/2021/5238 Part of Lands Field, land off Yewdale Road, Coniston</p> <p>Mr Johnston was invited to introduce the application.</p> <p>Having spoken with the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) and his planning consultant Mr Johnston had been assured that the application is valid and should be considered on its own merit i.e. as an application for access to a field rather than as access to a car park.</p> <p>Work had been undertaken on Lands Field, some top soil had been spread and the field partially reseeded, the remaining top soil is available for future use on the field. The field’s current agricultural use enables Mr Johnston to use the field for 56 non-consecutive days for camping, car parking, operating a circus or other activity within certain restrictions. He had been advised by the LDNPA that the application should be considered in the light of its existing use rather than its future, or potential future, use.</p> <p>Mr Johnston believes that the Highways report errs by taking potential future use into account. He summarised by indicating that he is able to use the field for car parking via the Coppermines Lane access, however, if this is pursued he believes it will result in problems for residents and businesses.</p>	

Jeff Carroll thanked the meeting for the opportunity to speak, although he admitted confusion at reading two statements supporting the application which did not refer to the application, but instead referred to increased parking. He stated that:

- Lands Field has never been prone to poor drainage. There are adjacent issues which relate to the council's drains leading from the cricket pitch and bowling greens toward Yewdale Road, Collingwood Close and Little Moss, but this has no relationship with Lands Field.
- A previous application for a similar entrance to a 100+ car and coach park had been refused, in part due to issues raised by Highways, but at that time, the Parish Council had referred to the neighbourhood plan and had listened to local opinion before objecting to such a large development.
- The closure of John Ruskin's school fields to car parking had exacerbated the problem of parking during the pandemic. However, as the real on-street parking problems have come from people wanting to park up Walna Scar Road or down by the Lake this raises the question as to how a large car park in the centre of the village will alleviate those particular problems.
- The access, as described in the application, appears to be designed to accommodate coaches, however, until the roads leading to Coniston are made coach friendly it is unwise to invite coaches to the area an action which could exacerbate highways issues.

In summary, Mr Carroll stated that he understood the need to encourage visitors and support tourist related industries; and he had always been a champion of local businesses, however, a large development such as this runs the risk of despoiling the very thing that visitors to the area are seeking – a genuine Lakeland community.

Fay Lakin spoke and added that last year the village experienced high levels of traffic and the coming year is likely to be worse. Operating a car park for 56 days might be an advantage enabling its impact on the village to be assessed.

Gemma Metcalf indicated the village was in need of more car parking spaces and that opposition was not founded on the basis of the application, but on the fact that the applicant is Mr Johnston. She spoke in favour of a car park on Lands Field and that Mr Johnston had offered her and other businesses on Yewdale Road car parking spaces.

Justin Farnan indicated that he was a director of Cumbria Tourism, but that he was not speaking in that capacity. He believes that coach transport is very unlikely to reappear this year and that parking problems are likely to be worse than last year.

Hannah Lane spoke as a business owner on Yewdale Road, she noted that people have experienced problems finding parking spaces and that Lands Field was the only realistic location for a car park. She observed that the additional footfall would be beneficial to all the businesses along Yewdale Road and supported the proposal.

Glyn Davies stated that the application is a proposal to make legal the removal of the wall and the creation of access to the field. Mr Johnston already has the right to operate a car park for 56 days using Coppermines Lane and it was

unnecessary to permanently despoil the high street for a temporary parking facility. Mr Davies noted that the village receives 86.3 inches of precipitation annually.

Jon Watson attempted to speak, but his Internet connection failed. He was advised to make any representations directly to the LDNPA.

County Councillor Matt Brereton supported the approach taken by Highways in its report and believes that the issues it raises were valid without taking any potential future use into consideration:

- Parking along the road would be removed to create access thereby losing a valuable free amenity parking for the village
- There would be reduced visibility for vehicles using Yewdale Road
- Consolidated surfacing will have an unknown impact on surrounding drainage and premises
- Road safety considerations do not allow consolidated surfaces within 5 meters of the highway
- The drainage channel catches run off water, but it is not clear where this drains.

It is clear that Highways believe that this application has a number of serious issues which need to be addressed.

Charlotte Crisp was not able to attend, but the clerk read her submission to the meeting. Objections raised included:

- The application is for access to a field already in breach of planning (per LDNPA Update 1, dated 12th March 2021)
- The application is for additional access, however, the field already has access off Coppermines Lane. The existing access has proved more than adequate to accommodate a temporary camp site in 2020; as well as vehicles, heavy plant and machinery used during the recent large scale drainage works objected to by the LDNPA (see above) The entrance has been omitted from the paperwork.
- Mr Johnson stated in his 'Further Provisional Statement to Coniston Business Forum' dated 23rd March 2021 that parking in the field would be for between 150 and 200 motor cars. Yet, the planning application under Section 8 of the application answers 'no' to new or altered pedestrian access to the public highway. The lack of a public footpath would lead to a high volume of pedestrians accessing the village through an entrance with no footpath and walking along the highway.
- There are potential safety issues being so close to the entrance to the Fire Station.
- The wall has been reduced under the pretence that it is unsafe, however, resources applied to other works on the field could have been used to remedy any defects the wall may have had.
- The Coniston Neighbourhood Plan 2015 identified the need to avoid major developments in the village to avoid excessive tourism overburdening the community and local amenities. A 150 to 200 space car park constitutes a major development.
- The vision of Coniston in 2025 is of a vibrant community with its current character intact. Lands field in the heart of the village nestles between the Coniston Institute on one side and the cricket pitch, bowling green and tennis courts on the other. Any development will have a significant and negative impact on the vibrancy and feel of the village.

	<p>Councillor Coward asked those councillors present for their observations.</p> <p>Councillor Sargeant indicated that car parking is a problem in the village, but that there were problems with the application, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is already a 20ft wide double gate into the field off Coppermines Lane, this has proven suitable to large vehicles earlier this year. • The application is not about car parking. Mr Johnston already has the existing ability to accommodate parking for 56 days without the need to create additional access. <p>Councillor Sargeant summarised by stating that he supports the use of the field for a 56 day period, but not the creation of a new access.</p> <p>Councillor Thompson noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The access onto Yewdale Road would remove between 8 and 10 free car parking spaces • There is a potential impact on the car parking spaces on the opposite side of the road being lost • Mr Johnston has indicated that the existing access was unable to be altered, but raised the questions ‘does it need altering?’ and ‘has alteration been given consideration?’ <p>Councillor Buller reiterated the issues surrounding the loss of existing car parking spaces when the field already has good access protected by yellow lines</p> <p>Councillor Airey could see both advantages and disadvantages with the idea of a car park; however, there are significant problems with this access being permitted.</p> <p>Councillor Coward reminded all present that the Parish Council was a consultee in the process, but that its role was to consider the application presented before it. She thanked everyone for taking the time to attend and taken part in the public meeting and encouraged all people who have an opinion in relation to this matter to communicate directly with the LDNPA.</p>	
201/2021	RESOLVED: it was unanimously decided to object to the application	
202/2021	Next Meeting	
	The next meeting of the Parish Council will be on Monday, 18 th May 2021 7.00pm at the Coniston Institute.	

Meeting closed at 7:55pm

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Date

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Signed & Approved by (Chair)