

Planning Application – Hatch End

I'm writing to set out the situation, as I see it, on the revised planning application for Hatch End, recently submitted. All this planning stuff can get pretty indigestible, so I'll try to make this a punchy summary.

1. **The current situation at Hatch End:** 7 buildings (not sure how subdivided into units), zero occupancy, total floor space 2,246 square metres, very occasional traffic to and from the site, poor condition and appearance, heights around 3.7 to 4 metres.
2. **The latest planning application, compared with last year's withdrawn one (last year's data in brackets):** 7 buildings (7), subdivided into 24 units plus hub (29), total floor space 2,214 square metres (3,198), 79 car parking spaces (97) and 34 bicycle spaces (48), building heights 4.1 to 5.5 metres (6.5)
3. **Other key changes in the latest planning application:** (a) Materials to be used: generally more sympathetic to the location, but stone specified as "Great Tew Ironstone"; (b) Car parking location: predominantly to the front (i.e. Eastern) side of the site, previously located behind the buildings; (c) Café: no mention in latest application; (d) Permitted uses: the application is to allow the buildings to be used for the activities set out in Planning Use Classes E and B8 (previously Planning Use Classes B1, B2 and B8). This is very significant – see below.
4. **Changes to the planning system:** In September 2020, Planning Use class B1 was revoked, and a new class E was introduced, which has very wide scope:
 - Display or retail sale of goods, other than hot food
 - Sale of food and drink for consumption (mostly) on the premises
 - Provision of Financial services, Professional services (other than health or medical services), or Other appropriate services in a commercial, business or service locality
 - Indoor sport, recreation or fitness (not involving motorised vehicles or firearms)
 - Provision of medical or health services (except the use of premises attached to the residence of the consultant or practitioner)
 - Creche, day nursery or day centre (not including a residential use)
 - Uses which can be carried out in a residential area without detriment to its amenity
 - Offices to carry out any operational or administrative functions, Research and development of products or processes, Industrial processes.

Class B8 remains, whose permitted use is storage and distribution. Class B2 also remains (general industrial) but is not included in this planning application, whereas it was in last year's. Please Note: 22 of the 24 units are requested as having this new use class E, and 2 for class B8. There is no indication that the developer, Middle Aston Ltd, intends to use the units for all of the permitted activities in class E – so far as we know, they are targeting light industrial, research and office uses – but if permission were granted as requested, the developer or his successor would be perfectly entitled to do so.

5. **Why does this matter?** Our previous concerns were twofold: (i) density, height and appearance of the buildings; and (ii) traffic through our village and past Dr Radcliffe's School. Concern (i) has, in my view, partially been addressed by the changes made in the revised application. On the other hand, concern (ii) has become much greater; many of the permitted uses in class E have very significant traffic implications. The Highways Team at OCC "nodded through" last year's application, seeming to accept without question the (highly suspect) assumptions and forecasts contained in it about vehicle movements, and ignoring the unsuitability of our roads for high traffic density. I feel very strongly that we need to insist on a thorough and transparent evaluation of the potential traffic impact in this proposal.
6. **A further thought:** The Planning Officer at CDC suggested that it *might* be possible for CDC to approve the application with a condition restricting the permitted uses to those formerly covered by classes B1, B2 and B8. This is a possibility we should explore

Edward Dowler