

Planning Application 20/01637/FUL

Change of use from agricultural to car park land adjacent to No 10, The Street, Englefield.

Additional Submission from Englefield Parish Council

The proposed development is primarily justified, and overwhelmingly supported, on the grounds of road safety in that it will remove cars particularly from a constricted area around the school and provide for safer walking and cycling in that area. On the basis of road safety alone any sensible risk assessment must surely lead to the conclusion that some such mitigation is essential to provide a level of risk that is as low as reasonably practical. It is particularly noted that the Committee report includes a number of photographs taken when there is no traffic but none of those supplied with the application that show a very different picture.

But there are other considerations too. Englefield remains a real village community that has evolved over time, with the few 18th century buildings added to throughout the 19th century after the old village was removed and with further development in the 20th and 21st century.

Unfortunately, changing social and economic conditions have overtaken the community. Within living memory, the village survived as almost an enclosed community where cars were counted on the fingers of one hand and visitors from outside were rare, for the most part tradesmen some of whom still used horse-drawn transport. The number of schoolchildren numbered no more than 30 and all arrived on foot or by bicycle. That is no longer the case and owing to the constraints of the original layout the village suffers greatly from the impact of those changes – suffering that may readily be alleviated.

In landscape terms, while the proposal may impact somewhat adversely on the setting, that impact would be minimal and outweighed by the benefits from the car park. No erection of any structure is proposed, just some permeable surface treatment replacing a small area of grass and some screening vegetation – none of which would have any irremovable effect on the land. Against this must be set the visual intrusion, inconvenience, reduction in air quality and risk to personal safety from the present situation.

Considered on the basis of a full social cost-benefit analysis this proposal must surely succeed and we would urge members to approve the proposal, please.