

Councillors vote with their 'hearts not heads' to save businessman's garage

An East Lancashire garage owner has been given the green light to continue his business operations, despite council officers' initial recommendation to reject a retrospective planning application for the use of his home's lower ground floor and yard as an auto-repair shop. The decision was made even though Hyndburn planning committee was advised by its experts that the proposal for 295 Burnley Road, Accrington, was 'out of place in the residential area'.

Tom McVicker can now maintain the use of part of his property, near Accrington Cemetery, as a vehicle repair business, as it has been since September 2021. The application was discussed at the request of the committee chairman Cllr Dave Parkins, within whose Huncoat ward Tom's Auto Repairs is located.

Three objections were raised by local residents citing noise nuisance, disturbance, frequent traffic movements, exhaust fumes, late-night arrival of vehicles on breakdown trucks, and parking issues. Local resident Jackie Rawstron expressed to the committee that her right to privacy and peaceful enjoyment of her home was compromised by the business.

However, another neighbour, Marilyn Threlfall, stated that the garage had not caused her any issues during its operation. Cllr Parkins stepped down from the committee to urge it to reject the officer's recommendation and allow the business to continue operating.

He remarked, "Before this application there had been no complaints about the premises. Mr McVicker has looked at alternative industrial units but as a one man band he would be unable to afford them.", reports [Lancs Live](#).

“He will accept any conditions the committee wishes to place on him. 70 per cent of his business is mobile. To take food and drink off the table of a well-established and respected businessman strikes me as wrong.”

A planning officer’s report informed the committee last week: “This is a retrospective application. The car repair garage is out of place in the residential area. It adversely affects the amenities of the area and is likely to continue to do so in an unacceptable way even if it is restricted by condition.”

Peel ward’s Cllr Clare Pritchard added her perspective, “I am all for business and enterprise but this is a tricky one. It is a dwelling house, not a business premises.”

Echoing the sentiment of caution, Overton Labour colleague Cllr Scott Brerton said, “This is a really difficult one. It is quite well hidden. This is someone’s livelihood.”

Following deliberation, the committee made the decision to pass the application with a majority, eight to three, pending the agreement on specific conditions with chief planning officer Simon Prideaux.

Cllr Parkins expressed his approval post-meeting: “This is the right decision.”

Reflecting on the outcome, Ms Rawstron commented, “I am disappointed.”

Baxenden Conservative Cllr Kath Pratt weighed in with concern, stating, “I think they voted with their hearts not with their heads. This is setting a precedent.”

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