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From: planning@staffmoorlands.gov.uk
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2015 3:14 PM
To: Planning (SMDC)
Subject: Comment Received from Public Access

Application Reference No. : SMD/2015/0202 Site Address: Premier Garage Leek Ltd Broad Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 5NS Leek Comments by: S J Hemmings
From:

Phone:

Email:

Submission: Objection

Comments: I am writing as a local resident to object to the above application. I am greatly concerned that the proposal, if it goes ahead, will have significant detrimental effects on the environment and the local community. As a local resident this is a matter of concern which affects me and other local residents.

(1) WASTE & LITTER - The applications should be rejected on the following grounds. The fast-food industry uses huge volumes of needless and wasteful packaging. McDonald's produce annually around the world 1 million tons of disposable paper and plastic packaging. This is thrown away after less than 5 minutes use. This can hardly be sustainable: there is only so much space for landfills and a limited supply of petroleum for the production of plastic packaging. Paper products lead to destruction of trees, and natural forests being replaced by environmentally damaging monoculture plantations; dangerous chlorine compounds are often used to bleach the paper. Plastic-based packaging is non-biodegradable and often consists of polystyrene made using blowing agents which contribute to ozone depletion or the 'greenhouse effect'. Furthermore, McDonald's do not recycle any of their customer packaging after use.

In addition to the waste and pollution caused, the production and use by McDonald's of this disposable packaging causes litter. McDonald's estimated in the the recently-concluded High Court libel case 'McDonald's Corporation v Steel & Morris' (dubbed the 'McLibel' trial, in which Helen Steel and Dave Morris of London Greenpeace were defending leaflets produced by the group) that every take-away purchase (approx 50% of business) averages 7 items of potential litter per person. If a store sells to 3,000 customers a day, this means 10,500 items taken out of the store daily. To grant McDonald's this planning application will add significantly to the local litter problem. While the applicant may claim to perform 'litter patrols', such efforts have negligible effects on the huge quantity of litter that is already being caused by the store. In fact, Mr Justice Bell stated (as part of his Judgment in the McLibel trial) that "My conclusion from the evidence which I accept is that McDonald's restaurant frontages have been kept clear of litter, but that the system of regular patrols to clear up litter rather further afield has often broken down."

Stacey Stump, the manager of McDonald's, Kings Road, London, gave evidence in the McLibel Trial about the problems of company litter. He recognised that "there is a lot of McDonald's litter" and admitted that there were "times when the volume of business is so great and generates so much litter that [the store] cannot effectively deal with it in the

course of a day". He also said "I have seen McDonald's litter in a lot of places, not just around my restaurant".

McDonald's Local Store Marketing news-sheet for May 1990 admitted "When one considers that McDonald's each day is serving food and drink to approximately three-quarters of a million people in the UK [the figure is now at least double that], it does not take a genius to conclude that our packaging will be prevalent on the streets whilst littering continues." Professor Graham Ashworth, Director-General of the "Tidy Britain Group" ('TBG'), witness for McDonald's, admitted that the TBG had eventually changed its name from the "Keep Britain Tidy Group" after "it had become apparent" in the late 70's and early 80's that Britain was no longer tidy. It was, he said "strange to have an organisation talking about keeping a situation that did not exist". He also admitted that "the rise of fast food business" was "certainly a factor" (note: McDonald's UK was launched in 1974). He said that this was part of a "great increase in packaging" in general and agreed that McDonald's is in the "top 1 or 2%" of all companies whose products end up as litter.

In any event, even if the packaging is properly disposed of, the local authority is forced to deal with the waste disposal environmental problems caused by landfill and incineration of polystyrene and coated paper materials. Legislation is currently being prepared for the limiting and banning of unnecessary disposable packaging for the above reasons. I would suggest that, were this application to be allowed, it should have a condition attached - namely that McDonald's set up recycling schemes for all/most of the customer packaging used in the store and that they employ a litter patrol continuously during the hours when the premises are in use, to retrieve their rubbish from the surrounding streets.

(2) EMPLOYMENT - The applications should be rejected on the following grounds. No doubt, McDonald's would claim that their store would provide new jobs. I would like to point out that that the majority will be non-skilled, part-time jobs (approx 80% according to company figures) with low wages. Workers at McDonald's are not paid overtime rates (even when they work very long hours), and they have no guaranteed hours of employment. Pressure to keep profits high and wage costs low results in understaffing, so staff have to work harder and faster. As a consequence, accidents (particularly slips and burns) are common. The majority of employees are people who have few job options and so are forced to accept this exploitation. Not surprisingly staff turnover at McDonald's is high, making it virtually impossible to unionise and fight for a better deal, which suits McDonald's who have always been opposed to Unions. Mr Justice Bell summarised conditions for workers at McDonald's thus: "hard and sometimes noisy and hectic nature of the work, occasional long, extended shifts including late closes, inadequate and unreliable breaks during busy shifts, instances of autocratic management, lack of third party representation in cases of grievance and occasional requests to go home early without pay for the balance of the shift if business is slack." It should be noted that company clock cards for just one store (chosen at random as a 'snapshot' on company practice nationally) over a mere few weeks period [disclosed in the course of the trial] showed hundreds of unlawful breaches of employment law, each of which merited a prosecution and fine. I believe such breaches continue in all other McDonald's stores.

Rather than create jobs, McDonald's stores are a threat to other local food service jobs and businesses, which are all more labour-intensive due to McDonalds' high pressure, fast turnover of business, low staff/volume of sales ratio. McDonald's stores nationally average around only 15 per cent crew labour costs as a proportion of sales.

Sid Nicholson (Vice-President of McDonald's UK) admitted (in his testimony in the McLibel trial) that employees do not have any guaranteed hours or pay at McDonald's. He agreed that managers have the power, while any crew person is working their scheduled shift, to compulsorily cut or extend the hours being worked (the crew handbook states: "On occasions you may be asked to continue working past your normal finishing time. You will be released as soon as the need for your service has passed"). Even breaks can be cut. In any event, crew are not paid for meal breaks.

Mr Nicholson also admitted that any McDonald's workers interested in union membership "would not be allowed to collect subscriptions...put up notices...pass out any leaflets...to organise a meeting for staff to discuss conditions at the store on the premises...or to inform the union about conditions inside the stores" (which would be deemed 'Gross Misconduct' and as such a 'summary sackable offence'). These all relate to clauses in the 'Crew Handbook' - the company's contract of employment. In fact, Mr Nicholson agreed, "they would not be allowed to carry out any overt union activity on McDonald's premises". I believe that this systematic discrimination against trade union activity is unlawful and Haringey Council will be failing in its statutory duty to protect employees' working conditions should they allow this application to go ahead. I call for legal action to be taken against the company for its use of its employee contract in other local stores.

Mr Justice Bell in his Judgment in the McLibel trial found as a fact that the company is "strongly antipathetic to any idea of unionisation of crew" in its stores and pays 'low wages, helping to depress wages in the catering trade'. Hence the existence of McDonald's low paid jobs drives down the already scandalously low wages of many local workers. Crew wages continue to be pathetically low.

Mr Justice Bell's ruling concerning wages means that by allowing store to open the local authority would be allowing McDonald's to further threaten wage levels of the thousands of catering and retail workers employed in the borough.

[Note: McDonald's did not appeal any of Mr Justice Bell's rulings against them, in fact stating, on the eve of the 1999 McLibel Appeal, in writing to Ms Steel and Mr Morris on 5.1.99, that the judge was 'correct in his conclusions'. Hence the company has formally accepted the criticisms, quoted from the judgment, in this and following sections. The ruling last year stands as a serious indictment of the company's core business practices. The burden is now on them to demonstrate if they can that fundamental change has since taken place.]

I would suggest that, were this application to be allowed, it should have conditions attached - namely that McDonald's give a written undertaking not to discriminate against any staff engaged in trade union-type activity at the branch, that the discriminatory clauses be removed from the contract of employment, and also that representatives of the local branches of relevant unions be allowed free access to the staff on the premises, including use of a noticeboard without any censorship by the management. That further, store clock-card records be permanently available to regular inspection by local authority inspectors and/or trade union representatives.

(3)EXPLOITING CHILDREN - The applications should be rejected on the following grounds. In his Judgment, Mr Justice Bell made a finding of fact that McDonald's advertising and marketing strategies "exploit children by using them, as more susceptible subjects of advertising, to pressurise their parents into going into McDonald's". This damning legal finding from a High Court judge after voluminous evidence on the subject (including from the most senior McDonald's marketing chiefs from the US and UK) refers not just to McDonald's advertising but also to their local marketing strategies to target children and community events, especially their use of 'Ronald McDonald' as a salesman, masquerading as a clown.

McDonald's official and confidential 'Operations Manual' was read out during the trial: "Ronald loves McDonald's and McDonald's food. And so do children, because they love Ronald. Remember, children exert a phenomenal influence when it comes to restaurant selection. This means you should do everything you can to appeal to children's love for Ronald and McDonald's." McDonald's use their local stores as a base for Corporate marketing and outreach into local community events, fetes, schools, competitions and so on, especially where children are involved. The High Court has found this to be child exploitation and therefore they should not be granted planning permission to open or expand a store in an area where there are local children vulnerable to this type of exploitation, such as Haringey. The company admitted in the McLibel trial that "It is our objective to dominate the communications area...because we are competing for a share of the customers mind". They also admitted that community and charitable activity is 'a benefit to the company' and 'good business' which gains 'free publicity', and that educational promotions in schools 'generate better feelings' towards McDonald's and leads to more 'patronage'. I would suggest that, were this application to be allowed, it should have the condition attached that McDonald's not be allowed to market the company or its logo or products to local children.

(4) PROMOTING AND SELLING UNHEALTHY FOOD (PARTICULARLY TO CHILDREN) - The applications should be rejected on the following grounds. Local authorities are concerned with encouraging an awareness in young people of the facts of nutrition and a healthy lifestyle - including taking these matters into account in their provision of lunchtime meals to pupils in their schools. Yet McDonald's admits that it specifically targets young children with its advertising and propaganda, effectively indoctrinating them with misleading ideas as to what is wholesome and normal for children to eat. The type of food promoted by and supplied by McDonald's (high in fat, salt and sugar, and low in fibre and vitamins) and their strategy of targetting regular customers to eat such food more often is in breach of recommendations from both national and international organisations (like the World Health Organisation) concerned with promoting a healthy diet. To be seen to support any avoidable expansion of trading by McDonald's would undermine work done over these issues with young people.

The McLibel judge ruled: "Various company advertisements, promotions and booklets have pretended to a positive nutritional benefit which McDonald's food did not match", ie. McDonald's food is not nutritious and they are therefore deceiving the public when they promote it as such. In his judgement, McDonald's are risking the health of their long-term regular customers. The Court of Appeal added to the findings against the company made by the trial judge, ruling that it was true that 'if one eats enough McDonald's food one's diet may well become high in fat etc., with the very real risk of heart disease'. The Lord Justices went on to state that this last finding 'must have a serious effect on their trading reputation since it goes to the very business in which they are engaged'. McDonald's junk food is high in fat (including saturated fat), salt, and sugar, and low in fibre and vitamins. A diet of this type is linked to a greater risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and other diseases. Their food also contains many chemical additives, some of which may lead to a greater risk of ill-health or hyperactivity in children.