

Account of Purley on Thames

Venners Enterprises

R200225 7/3/2017

The Venners Family

72 Purley Rise has been the address of the Venners since the end of WW1. Jack Venners took up a government offer to run a small holding and set up a poultry farm on land between the railway and the main road and to the west of Westbury Lane. This had at one time been part of Purley's Yonder Common Field and was about 8 acres. After the second world war his son Ken diversified and set up Caravenners to sell, store and repair caravans on the eastern side of the plot. Bernard the grandson had an interest in military vehicles and kept a number there as well as trying out other enterprise possibilities which kept running into conflict with the planning authority.

Plots alongside the main road were sold off for houses and a smaller house was built alongside the original farmhouse which Bernard's mother Monica lived in for many years until her death. The farmhouse was sold off around 1980 and no longer forms part of the landholding. At the moment (2017) the rest of the land has been identified for housing and we await a formal proposal. An earlier application could have been successful had the Venners agreed to build to a roundabout at the junction with Westbury Lane to provide a safe access to the site.

The land is crossed along the line of the rear boundary of the houses on Purley Rise by a foul sewer serving these properties and Westbury Lane.

History

The original farm was formed just after the First World War as a smallholding under the Government's programme for re-settling officers. The land was sold from the manor of Purley Magna by Mr K A McAndrews subject to a covenant that no noxious trade or business shall be carried out on the land. It was not mentioned in Kelley's Directory of 1928 but by 1931 it was listed as a poultry farm owned by Mr S J W H Venners.

The frontage on what was then known as the A42 Reading Road was subjected to a Building Line Order by the County Council in 1926 after proposals had been made to develop the Purley Rise Estate. (ref BCC minutes 1926 pp76,278).

In 1949 the land was owned and farmed by Kenneth Joseph Venners.

Caravenners

Ken Venners started a caravan business on the site in 1952. He had purchased some holiday caravans which were kept at various coastal sites and which were brought back to Purley for repair and storage during the winter months. The business expanded over the years to include the sale of new caravans, storage of other people's caravans, sale of accessories eg bottled gas and the rental of camper vans.

The site has also been used for fairs and rallies, especially of military vehicles and fire engines.

Neighbour complaints

In the 1970s and 1980s there were numerous complaints from neighbours about the noise and nuisance caused by the businesses conducted on the site. After Ken Venners died relations with

neighbours deteriorated badly and a very hostile atmosphere was generated.

A statement was made in 1978 that the caravan business was being gradually run down and caravans sold.

The use was further intensified in the mid 80s when Marshalls Garage began using the land to store cars. This was followed by the sale of Camper Vans and eventually an Enforcement Order was served requiring them to desist.

Planning History

An application was made to use the whole site for residential development but this was strongly objected to and the matter was dropped. Instead a more limited application was made to build two houses on Westbury Lane, to build a separate cottage adjacent to the entrance and to sell off the farm house. This was granted permission and effectively blocked the opportunity to construct a roundabout at the junction of Westbury Lane which would have been needed to provide access from the site. The matter was revived briefly a few years later as part of the considerations for the new Berkshire structure plan but it was deemed that the land was undevelopable.

In 1980 an application (no 114020) was made by K J Venners for a change of use 'to sheet metal work from caravan repairs' This was objected to by the Parish Council as 'not in keeping with the residential surroundings' The application was refused. on 26/11/80 on the grounds that while the building was and had been used without permission for work in repairing caravans the introduction of a permission for general light industrial use would be contrary to the Berkshire Structure Plan. The matter had arisen because of complaints by neighbours of the noise of cutting aluminium and an investigation by the enforcement officer who had determined that the usage was unauthorised and that permission must be sought if it were to continue.

In 1985 an application (no 124038) was made by B N Venners for change of use ' from workshop to light industrial '. It was stated in the application that the site had been used 'since 1952 for the storage, hiring and maintenance of caravans ' The workshop was 330 sqm. and was stated as being 'surplus to the requirements of the caravan use on the site which will continue'. This was considered at the meeting of 19/6/85 and deferred because the views of South Oxfordshire District were to be sought. They raised objections and the application was refused on 17/7/85.

In 1986 an application (no 125985) was made for change of use 'from workshop ancillary to caravan storage to workshop for repair and restoration of antique furniture' This was considered at a Planning meeting on 26/3/83 but was deferred until 24/4/86 as the site notice had not expired. It was made in the name of Josey and Paynter. The Parish Council objected strongly on the grounds of the site lying within the AONB, too close to residential properties and restricted road access. The Planning Committee granted permission but restricted it personally to Paynter, Josey and Cooper (condition 11.02). In the application the statement was made that the land had been used for :-

- a) The moving of caravans for third parties
- b) the hire of caravans
- c) the buying and selling of caravans
- d) the sale of bottled gas
- e) the repair of 60 or so caravans owned by Mr Venners which were normally kept at coastal sites.

The building concerned had a floor area of 150 sqm and had previously been used as one of the buildings for the repair of caravans. It was further stated that they no longer sold bottled gas, there were only a few movements now for third parties, there is only one employee and the company now only sells new caravans.

