# Cobham residents debate McDonald's planning application amid health concerns



Residents of Cobham, a Surrey village known for its affluent community, are facing a significant planning decision as a global fast-food chain, McDonald’s, seeks to establish a new restaurant on Portsmouth Road. The site has previously been occupied by the Loch Fyne Restaurant, and the outcome of McDonald’s application will be determined at a meeting of the Elmbridge Borough Council on 24 April.

Planning officers have recommended approval for the transformation of the disused restaurant into a McDonald’s outlet. This proposal, however, has sparked considerable opposition, with nearly 500 letters of objection submitted to the council. Concerns among residents revolve around the perceived negative impact of a new fast-food outlet on the health of the local community, particularly given the proximity of schools and play areas.

Competition for local youths and potential health implications have emerged as key points of contention. Many residents argue that the restaurant will promote unhealthy eating habits among children. One local voiced, "the outlet will be detrimental to the health of Cobham" due to its closeness to recreational areas, including Wyndham Avenue park and Hamilton Avenue play area, which are merely a four-minute walk from the proposed site. Notably, Felton Fleet Prep School and Cobham Free School are also within a seven-minute walking distance.

In response to these concerns, planning officers offered a counterargument citing that the nearest schools do not fall within a 400m walking radius of the proposed McDonald’s. They described the A3 as a “man-made barrier” that would discourage children from traversing towards the fast-food chain. This is coupled with the assertion that the proposed site is not situated on the main route to Cobham Free School.

Significantly, Surrey County Council's public health team did not formally oppose the establishment of the new restaurant, with officers concluding there is a lack of evidence linking the fast-food chain to adverse health effects in surrounding areas. Furthermore, they indicated that the existing infrastructure would not result in a clustering of takeaway restaurants, as the next nearest outlets are approximately 700m away in Cobham’s centre.

Despite the opposition, supporters of the McDonald’s proposal argue it could bring substantial economic benefits to Cobham, potentially generating an estimated £60,000 annually in business rates and creating around 120 jobs locally. Advocates for the fast-food outlet have described the current building as an "eyesore" in need of refurbishment. They have also rationalised that comments about the quality of food served are "irrelevant" as no one is obliged to dine there.

In tandem with the application, a petition opposing the McDonald’s plans has garnered over 34,000 signatures, with residents advocating for the space to be repurposed into a community hub. Concerns raised include anticipated increases in traffic, litter, and long-term health implications for local residents.

If permitted, the new McDonald’s is planned to operate from 6am to 11pm daily, featuring both indoor and outdoor seating for up to 60 customers, along with parking for 30 vehicles, including accessible and electric vehicle charging bays. McDonald’s has been approached for additional comments pertaining to the application.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://mcdonaldsconsultation.co.uk/cobham> - This URL supports the claim that McDonald's is proposing a new restaurant in Cobham on Portsmouth Road, with a public consultation held and a Change of Use application submitted to Elmbridge Borough Council. It also provides details about the proposed restaurant's features, such as creating jobs and generating business rates.
2. <https://newleatherheadliving.wordpress.com/2024/09/05/mcdonalds-cobham-planning-application/> - This URL corroborates the information about McDonald's planning application for Cobham, specifically mentioning the site's former use as the Loch Fyne restaurant and the proposal's focus on takeaway services without a drive-thru. It also discusses the economic benefits and community concerns.
3. <https://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/news/2024/proposals-mcdonalds-cobham> - This URL from Elmbridge Borough Council confirms the awareness of the proposals for a McDonald's in Cobham and encourages residents to participate in the planning process through the council's system.
4. <https://mcdonaldsconsultation.co.uk/cobham/the-proposals/> - This URL provides detailed information about McDonald's proposals for the Cobham site, including no drive-thru services and the internal reconfiguration of the existing building for seating up to 60 customers.
5. <https://newleatherheadliving.wordpress.com/2024/05/10/mcdonalds-also-targeting-cobham-disused-pub/> - This URL offers additional context on McDonald's expansion plans in Surrey towns, including Cobham, highlighting the site's history as the Little White Lion and Loch Fyne, and the absence of a drive-thru in the proposal.
6. <https://mcdonaldsconsultation.co.uk/cobham/did-you-know/> - This URL supports McDonald's commitment to addressing litter concerns with daily litter picks around their sites, reinforcing their environmental responsibility as part of the Cobham proposal.
7. <https://www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/surrey-news/mcdonalds-could-green-light-surrey-31428372> - Please view link - unable to able to access data