

**Reference Number: SMD/2016/0175**

**Old Reference Number: PP-04913799**

**Site address: Consall Hall, Consall Lane, Consall, Staffordshire ST9 0AG**

**Description: Erection of marquee**

**Handling Officer: Arne Swithenbank**

**My Details:**

**Mr & Mrs J S Penfold  
The Priory  
Consall  
Staffordshire  
ST9 0AF**

**Nature of submission:** to inform the Authority that we object to the Planning Application

### **Comments**

It is with great reluctance that we feel it necessary to respond to the Planning Application for a marquee at Consall Hall. We chose to live in Consall 30 years ago for its rural, quiet location. It is a small closely-knit community of friends and neighbours and so this planning application is a sensitive issue. We embraced the opening of Consall Nature Park (1989) as an environmental resource for public enjoyment, and also, with respect for our neighbour Mr Podmore, supported his original plans to open Consall Hall Gardens to the public. However, we have witnessed creeping development of commercial events at Consall Hall and feel that further expansion of visitor accommodation will aggravate the existing problems caused to the community.

The proposal by Red Oak Events is for a marquee that will accommodate 180+ guests and provide additional facilities for a wider range of events.

The main areas of concern are due to issues of:-

- Access
- Noise and disturbance
- Lighting
- Environmental concerns

### **Access**

#### Infrastructure

You will recall that proposals in the SMDC Churnet Valley Master Plan for a Tourism Hub at Consall Nature Park (SCC) were rejected due to poor road access. Despite this, visitor numbers continue to grow.

The infrastructure is unable to cope with the additional visitor numbers generated by Red Oak Events at Consall Hall. Consall Lane is a narrow, single track lane which is barely adequate for existing vehicles and pedestrians. Of the two entrances to the Hall, the gated Main Entrance is seldom used and often displays a No Entry sign. At this point the lane is at its widest, and traffic problems would be reduced if this entrance was used for event traffic. However, it would not ease the traffic flow through Consall village.

Visitors are directed beyond this point where the lane narrows with no signed passing places with the result that traffic uses farm gateways, private entrances and grass verges to avoid oncoming vehicles. It is a popular route for walkers using public footpaths leading from the lane. There is an acute blind corner immediately before the "Visitors' Entrance" for Consall Hall, where the public road ends.

#### Volume of Traffic.

The area lacks a cohesive traffic plan and visitor management for the communities of Consall and Consall Forge.

At present, events are held several times a week and regularly cause disturbance throughout the day, beginning early in the morning until after midnight. There is traffic congestion when cars leave the event and meet taxis arriving for pick-up and finding there is nowhere to pass. We have to resort to placing traffic cones in our driveway to prevent its being used as a passing place.

Traffic flow generated by visitors to Consall Nature Park, the Black Lion Pub, Churnet Valley Railway and Consall Gardens recently came together on 17 April 2016 to create utter chaos on Consall Lane. Cars, minibuses and a coach were unable to find adequate parking at Consall Hall and were directed away to find parking places in private driveways, verges and along the private road into Consall Nature Park. Many of the vehicles became stranded in mud and sought help from Rangers at Consall Nature Park, the AA and breakdown vehicles to pull them out.

#### Video and photographic evidence.

To our knowledge there has not been a recent traffic census on Consall Lane. With this in mind, and due to our concern at the extreme volume of traffic we adjusted our security cameras on that day to record vehicle and pedestrian movements between 11.46 to 17.30. During this period the camera recorded 263 traffic movements; some of which were a single car but some were of convoys of 10 or 12 cars at any one time using the gateway as a passing place. This evidence demonstrates that many hundreds of cars were using the lane. This bears out the claim on Consall Hall website that more than 1200 people attended this single event.

**\*Please note:** Attached to this correspondence is a memory stick showing the initial video recording made at 11.46am together with a bus parked in the driveway of Lawn Farm, and other vehicles stuck in mud. The full recording is available to SMDC Planning Committee and Staffordshire County Council Highways Department.

#### Damage to road

Staffordshire County Council Highways Department has recently surveyed the lane to examine damage caused by the volume of traffic. It was re-surfaced last year but the road surface has suffered severe deterioration since then. An increase in the number of visitors to extended facilities at Consall Hall is likely to cause further damage.

## Recommendations

In our previous letter (18<sup>th</sup> October 2014) we offered some recommendations which would limit the disturbance caused by events. They are still pertinent, and we ask that they are given consideration.

- All traffic to use the Main Entrance to Consall Hall, thus avoiding the narrowest and hazardous stretch of Consall Lane
- The size and nature of events to be limited to the capacity of the on-site car park.
- Restriction on the size of vehicles e.g. to exclude large coaches and all but essential goods vehicles
- Location of all events to be held within the existing function rooms in order to limit noise. (Noise is more apparent when the doors are opened to provide ventilation. Air conditioning would be eliminate the need to open the doors.)
- Review of the Licensing agreement to reduce licensing hours from 1.00am to 11.00pm
- A Visitor Management Plan for Consall to represent the interests of all relevant parties, including residents, public sector authorities and commercial businesses.

**The Priory  
Consall  
Wetley Rocks  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire  
ST9 0AF**

18<sup>th</sup> October 2014

Ref: 339168

Jenny Weston  
Technical Officer  
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council  
Moorlands House  
Stockwell Street  
LEEK  
Staffs ST13 6HQ

Copy to:  
Licensing Department, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council  
Highways Department, Staffordshire County Council

Dear Ms Weston,

**Noise Complaint "Halcyon Room, Consall Hall"**

I refer to your letter of 19<sup>th</sup> September and subsequent telephone conversations. I have enclosed information which I hope will provide a fuller understanding of the nature of the noise and disturbances which we have experienced during the summer months. I should stress that the incidents recorded on the Log Sheet are by no means a comprehensive list of events, but rather a sample of the types of disturbance caused by a variety of indoor and outdoor events (weddings, proms, corporate entertainment and private parties). All of these events were accompanied by disco and/or live music.

Consall is an environmentally sensitive area, defined by its rural location and tranquil surroundings, and many residents have chosen to live in the area for this reason, while others rely on the land for their livelihood. The development of Consall Hall as a commercial entertainment venue brings no benefit to the local community.

Consall Hall is adjacent to a unique landscape area designated as a Nature Park open to restricted numbers of visitors for walking, education and nature conservation. It is celebrated for its biodiversity and most of the park is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest for the protection of plants and wildlife. It is also adjacent to RSPB reserves and populated by a wide variety of bird species, some relatively uncommon.

I am mindful that Consall Hall has a long tradition of opening its gardens to local groups and charities. We actively gave our support for the original public opening of the gardens, but now the public is excluded from all but nine days a year in favour of private functions. The nature of the events held at Consall Hall has developed into a busy entertainments

programme which is not in keeping with the area, and appears to have moved well beyond the original conditions of the Licensing agreement.

Throughout the summer events have regularly been held on Fridays, Saturdays and one midweek evening each week, and sometimes on Sundays. While the noise is not "prejudicial to health" it does constitute a nuisance in that it interferes with our enjoyment of our home. The location of our property in relation to Consall Hall means that we are particularly susceptible to noise issuing from the Halcyon Room as our rooms face the rear of the house and we frequently use the garden. The noise is worse in fine weather when doors at the venue are opened to provide ventilation. On some occasions we have had afternoons and evenings ruined by the thudding of disco music and shrieking of party-goers. Imagine if your neighbours were to throw a party three times a week!

The following advice is provided by the County Council for visitors to Consall Nature Park ...  
*"As with National Parks, people live in and alongside Consall Nature Park. Slow and cautious driving is essential as is respect for their privacy."*

Consall Lane is a single track lane and beyond the Main Gate to Consall Hall it narrows further with a blind bend and busy farm entrances. Event traffic is directed to use this route to the Halcyon Room and car park rather than the Main Gate. As a venue accommodating 200 people, the resultant traffic to Consall Hall causes a great deal of disturbance, beginning in the morning with the arrival of delivery vehicles. The situation is at its worst between 11.00pm and 1.00am when taxis arrive to collect guests and then find they are facing large numbers of cars exiting the premises. Unfortunately we frequently witness anything but "slow and cautious driving"! We experience disturbed sleep due to traffic noise and lights, and have also suffered verbal abuse from event guests and taxi drivers causing us to feel intimidated, threatened and humiliated. The lane was never intended for such a volume of traffic and the road surface and verges have deteriorated to a state which is hazardous in bad weather. Vehicles often use our drive as a passing place and we have had occasions where it has been impossible to gain access to our own drive. In winter our drive deteriorates into a quagmire.

I hope this information is helpful and provides a fuller picture of our concerns. I wish to address these issues in a positive manner, and should like to propose the following arrangements.

- No music (live or recorded) to be performed externally, and that the Halcyon Room is enclosed for the duration of the performance
- Review of the Licensing agreement to reduce licensing hours from 1.00am to 11.00pm
- All traffic to use the Main Entrance to Consall Hall, thus avoiding the narrowest stretch of Consall Lane which includes a blind bend and farm entrances
- Restriction on the size of vehicles attending entertainment events, e.g. to exclude large coaches and all but essential goods vehicles

I am hopeful that this matter can be resolved in a way that is acceptable to all parties.

Yours sincerely,

J.S. & S.A. Penfold