

Burnett, James

From: Planning (SMDC)
Subject: FW: Comment Received from Public Access

-----Original Message-----

From: planning@staffmoorlands.gov.uk [mailto:planning@staffmoorlands.gov.uk]
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2016 5:44 PM
To: Planning (SMDC)
Subject: Comment Received from Public Access

Application Reference No. : SMD/2016/0196 Site Address: Springs Cottage Farm Thornyedge Road Bagnall
Staffordshire ST9 9LE Stoke-on-trent Comments by: Ruth & Roger Jackson

From:
Thorney Edge House
Thorney Edge Road
Bagnall

Staffs.
ST9 9LE
Submission: Objection
Comments: 31.5.2016

Unlike many non - 'neighbours' from all over the UK who have commented via the planning portal, I am one of four genuine immediate neighbours living adjacent to Springs Cottage Farm, sharing the same post code.

I respectfully ask that the following points are given proper consideration in the planning process:-

1. Policy SS6C

There are numerous riding schools/establishments in the area, the most local of which (Endon Riding School) has failed recently. Indeed, some local venues seem to attract numerous other unrelated events such as machine sales & vehicle events to support their operation. Policy SS6C requires evidence of sustainable essential local need. This application provides little evidence of sustainable local need, particularly 'economically sustainable local need' and this requirement seems unproven in the application.

There are already two 'Olympic sized' (60m x 20m) riding arenas within very close proximity to the proposed development (Lodge Farm 2 miles distant; Beaver Hall 6 miles distant). The application to satisfy a 'vision to provide an Olympic Standard Venue' would therefore appear to duplicate venues already present in the locality which serve any essential local need.

Very slightly further afield, there are five venues within 25 miles with Olympic sized arenas and many more facilities available for hire - two of these venues have covered/indoor Olympic sized arenas:

Rodbaston Equestrian Centre, Penkridge (25 miles) is a specialist educational equine centre offering Riding for the Disabled lessons and hosting British Dressage affiliated events. It has a covered 60m X 20m arena, a 40m X 20m uncovered arena and a 60m X 30m indoor arena.

Priory Farm Equestrian Centre, Bradley, Stafford (21 miles) offers a 60m X 25m outdoor arena and a 40m x 20m indoor arena; tuition by an International dressage coach to Grand Prix level.

New Barn, Knutsford (18 miles) offers disabled riding facilities including a 60m X 20m covered arena with mirrors, a riding simulator and a classroom seating forty.

Ingestre Stables, Stafford (16 miles) is a leading equestrian establishment in the UK, which attracts clients from all over the world. Specialising in dressage and horse trials; schoolmaster horses available. Four arenas 62m x 24m outdoor, 54m x 20m indoor, 80m x 30m show jumping arena, horsewalker and lecture room. Disabled client accommodation.

Somerford Equestrian Centre, Congleton (12 miles) hosts dressage competitions from Preliminary level to Grand Prix level. 70m x 70m outdoor arena, two 65m x 20m dressage arenas, 65m x 40m show jumping arena.

2. Policy E3

The application should prove ¿the extent to which it supports and promotes the Staffordshire Moorlands as a tourism and leisure destination¿ Further, Policy E3 requires location ¿in or close to settlement where local services, facilities and public transport are available.¿ Local services, facilities and in particular, public transport are not available on Thorneyedge Road and therefore the application on this basis is not compliant with E3.

3. Policy R1

The proposed site is, for a large part, an escarpment naturally draining into an ecologically diverse wetland meadow. The wetland meadow generates a niche waterlogged ecosystem that forms a natural pool that straddles the curtilage of the farm and the proposed development site. Historically, the pool has supported a wide range of fauna & flora including newts, moorhens and coots. R1 requires that ¿developments should not harm the ¿ environmental quality of the area¿ and indeed should ¿enhance the character, appearance and biodiversity of the countryside¿. The proposed offers little in mitigation of the loss of the wetland meadow and pool or the niche environment that supports the wildlife it sustains. The substantial engineering operation required to cut into the escarpment to the rear of the site to allow the size of the development to fit the existing field is alone likely to degrade the natural habitat sufficiently to destroy the important wetland ecosystem it supports.

The scale, nature and level of activity involved and the type and amount of traffic generated, noise and pollution appears contrary to R1.

Further, there are, in accordance with R1, suitable buildings within the curtilage of the existing property which are appropriate for conversion to a substantial stabling facility. These, it seems, are however being saved for an application to provide extensive housing, which will effectively double the number of properties on this leg of Thorneyedge Road. Unfortunately the detail of the additional large scale, surely incongruous, housing application is not described in addition to the currently proposed already substantive development.

4. Policy C2

The proposed development is not, as Policy C2 requires, ¿located in accessible locations and supported by local transport infrastructure¿. The site is located entirely ¿outside the settlement boundary in open countryside¿, the type of development which Policy C2 expressly seeks to avoid.

The consideration C2 gives to floodlighting and noise pollution should be subject to further research in order to protect the existing bats, newts, water voles, badgers and birds of prey active over the proposed site. Floodlighting and tannoys etc. would be particularly invasive; should the development in any form be permitted, very specific prevention of such additional facilities frequently associated with horse riding premises/events would be strongly sought.

5. Policy D1

The consideration of scale could be examined more closely; the pursuit of sustainable development requires consideration of viability. There seems little in the application to sustain the economic viability of the scale of the proposed development. Should economic sustainability of the current proposal fail, consideration has to be given as to what use the development could then be put once the biogeography, geology and ecology of the site has been substantially degraded, if not destroyed. Mitigation of the loss of the wetland meadow would be extremely difficult whether the concern thrives or not, as a result of the large scale of the proposed development. What reassurances could be given, should the enterprise prove unsustainable, that future residential development permission would not be granted over the footprint of the development now proposed? The desire to develop housing on the site has already been expressed in the current application. Surely, if robust reassurances cannot be given in planning terms to prevent such a scenario, then precedent could be set for considerable adjacent development in the area.

6. Policy T1

Contrary to Staffordshire Local Transport Plans, the proposal would rely heavily on private cars for support as public transport does not service the site. The nearest bus route is approximately half a mile away and accessed by a substantial incline that may prove very difficult terrain for a disabled person. Accordingly, Policy T1 compliance could be questioned in terms of 'Sustainable Travel Modes'. Further, the proposed development also involves the loss of access to countryside via Bagnall Footpath 26 that runs through the area of the proposed development, ascending to completely overlook the whole site, as we believe do Bagnall Footpaths 27, 33 & 34. The application incorrectly states that no footpaths are present on the proposed development site.

7. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

NPPF 'places a strong emphasis on promoting sustainable development'. The development proposal is very large scale for the site and little evidence is given to support its economic deliverability and sustainability. The 'Very Special Circumstances' cited appear to offer very little mitigation to the scale of this application and may apply even less in support of a future proposed substantive housing development. At this scale, NPPF Paragraph 89 could be considered wholly unsupported. Further, the engineering 'cut and fill' operation required to fit the size of the development into the escarpment is likely to raise the finished levels of the proposed development. However, the details of how the development would be fitted into the meadow in engineering terms is not explained. The damage done to the natural drainage of the escarpment and wetland meadow, is likely to lead to waterlogging of the native trees and hedging resulting in their subsequent death. The proposal does not offer a solution to the treatment of the natural drainage of the escarpment and wetland meadow or describe how effluent produced will be dealt with. Clearly, as the name 'Spring Bank' suggests, there is naturally occurring water flowing through the site, the proper management of which must be considered of paramount importance, particularly given the adjacent Site of Biological Importance.

The application refers at point 5.5 to the substantial screening of the site to the North by Spring Bank Wood. This woodland has recently been the subject of a Statutory Notice from APHA (Animal & Plant Health Agency) 'previously

DEFRA) for Phytophthora infection and there is a high risk that it will have to be felled in the future. This would leave the application site visible from Bagnall village and also we understand from Bagnall Footpaths 21(a), 25, 12 and 28.

8. Very Special Circumstances

The cited 'Very Special Circumstance' that funding may be available would appear to question if there is purpose to Planning Control, if anyone with funding is permitted to develop.

Whilst Olympic Gold is a phenomenal achievement, it is difficult to find where consideration of such achievement is enshrined in planning legislation as a means by which such extensive development is mitigated.

There are, we are advised, twenty one 'Riding for the Disabled Groups' within a one-hour drive. As outlined in point 1 above, there are two Olympic size venues within six miles and a further five Olympic sized venues within 25 miles, offering far better logistical benefit in accordance with the Staffordshire Local Transport Plan. Would these disabled riding groups not be better served by the expert visiting them at one of these venues, rather than the whole group being required to attend a site that is inadequately serviced in the Staffordshire Green Belt, the development of which would involve the unnecessary extensive degradation of an otherwise open Green Belt Green Field Escarpment and Wetland Meadow contrary to Policies SS6C, E3, R1, C2, D1, T1 and NPPF?

9. Historical decisions

SMD/2016/0045 at Rock House Farm, Heath House Lane, Horton represents a remarkably similar Green Belt Application which was refused. The applicant likewise cites her daughter's success in a professional equestrian career to be a 'very special circumstance' and the application similarly includes the development of a commercial enterprise (horse training/competitive livery).

SMDC found that in Green Belt terms, the proposal was 'of a scale well in excess of the needs for this holding' and stated that 'it is clear that the scale of the development is augmented to support the envisaged business and this aspect is not considered to be within the scope of 'appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation'.

The Case Officer was also concerned at the 'potentially significant issue due to the traffic implications' in the (similarly) narrow Heath House Lane and noted that a footpath (similarly) crossed the site.

Application SMD/2012/0124 at Clough Lane, Hulme represents another similar Application, though substantially smaller, which was refused by SMDC and dismissed at later appeal.

This Application was also in Green Belt, close to a Public Footpath. The applicant, sought permission for a block of seven stables with an area of 208 square metres, (a third the size of Mr. Pearson's application for twenty two stables)

The Council deemed that the scale of the building was inappropriate in the Green Belt, that there was insufficient justification for its functional necessity and that an existing building had not been considered for conversion as an alternative to the new building.

On appeal, David Kaiserman stated that this much smaller development would 'significantly reduce the openness of the Green Belt' and constituted 'an intrusive structure which would be harmful to the intrinsic character and appearance of the countryside, an impact exacerbated by the fact that it is close to a public footpath'.

David Kaiserman commented that a lack of clarity in the submission pertaining to the proportion of commercial or private recreational use 'does not help in assessing the operational necessity of the scheme'.

Three further equestrian applications in close proximity to Springs Cottage Farm have all been refused by SMDC on grounds which include inappropriate use within the Green Belt.

These applications are: SMD/2012/0499 (Bigwood Farm, Cheddleton), SMD/2006/0216 (Lime Tree Farm, Bagnall) and SMD/2010/0303 (Addlestone Villa, Puddy Lane, Stanley).

Of these three, only SMD/2006/0216 (Lime Tree Farm, Bagnall) was of a scale comparable with Mr. Pearson's application. This Application was found to be inappropriate by reason of 'excessive size, massing and number of buildings' which would be harmful to the openness and character of the Green Belt.

10. Further Clarification

As the application appeared a little vague in some areas, (an 'unknown' response was entered on the application in some instances), clarification from the applicant was sought by those neighbours most likely to be affected, living adjacent and opposite. Mr. Pearson (Lee) kindly agreed to meet and discuss. To follow is a precis of concerns/explanations:

'Lee's previous application, rejected eighteen months earlier, was for eight stables (SMD/2014/0581). To explain why the new application was now for 22 stables it was found that eight are intended for personal use, eight stables for full livery, five stables for visitors and one stable for quarantine. That is additional to current facilities of six stables. It was noted that the application makes no mention of stables for livery.

'It was explained that the reason the application intends to develop the field rather than the farm curtilage was that it facilitated 'a private enterprise with a commercial section' which was to be 'kept separate from home'.

'No additional information could be given as to economic sustainability beyond stating that 'the funding is not set in stone'. There was no financial plan.

'The intention is to attract clients from more affluent areas. It is hoped that potential clients would travel up to two hours to use the full livery facility, but when asked if that was a realistic economic model, Lee said that he 'would not be bothered if stables remained empty'.

'Sewage disposal would if necessary be by chemical caravan toilets tipped down the toilet in Lee's own home.

'Parking was explained as 'the amount that fitted in the space'.

¿ With regard to the training in show jumping mentioned in the application, it was explained that external show jumping coaches would be brought in. Show jumping was included in the application because the agent felt that this would be viewed favourably by SMDC as regards tourism, because show jumping is more popular and less specialised than dressage.

¿ Concern was again expressed over the potential use of flood lights & tannoys.

In Conclusion:

We are a very small neighbourhood of just five farms in close proximity to each other about half a mile from Bagnall Village in a beautiful part of the Staffordshire Moorlands Green Belt. We are fortunate in that we all get on well, so discussion of Lee's application is made all the more difficult for us.

There is a genuine concern, amidst the hype of press headlines and nationwide electronic social media opinions sought by fame (given by many that will not be in the least bit affected at all from the proposed application and the potential outcome) that sensible discussion based on a well-established planning framework is not lost and overlooked.

Those of us that are genuinely affected by this proposal, whose day to day lives will be irrevocably changed by this application, ask that existing planning legislation designed to protect Green Belt areas is applied in the light of the constructive comments above.