From: planningcomments@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk
To: Planning Comments (SMDC)
Subject: Comment Received from Public Access
Date: 19 April 2017 10:35:52

Application Reference No. : SMD/2017/0152
Site Address: Land At Thorncross Farm Thorncliffe Road Leek Staffordshire
Comments by: W R Barker
From:

Phone:
Email: Submission: Objection
Comments: I strongly OBJECT to the above application which is the 6th in a long-running attempt to develop this Staffordshire Moorlands Ancient Uplands grazing field.

Firstly I would like to point out clearly that the land is NOT AT Thorncross Farm, of Thorncliffe Road as described in the applicants¿ application and on the SMDC website.

The field is not a curtiledge to Thorncross Farm.

This is a totally misleading address as the field in question is accessed off a very ancient and typically narrow country lane leading down to the very ancient, renowned and secluded beauty spot of Gypsy Hollow.

The applicants¿ are currently stating the total land area to be 5 acres, whereas in previous applications this has been stated as just 4.8 acres in total.

As this area includes the current enclosures for the stables, yard, equipment and tack shed, designated concreted muck midden, and a sizeable raised ménage, the remaining useable pasture area is clearly significantly less than 4.8 acres, - perhaps 4 acres maximum.

At the recommended minimum standard of 1 acre per horse, at least 3 acres are used for the applicants¿ 3 horses, the remaining area therefore being extremely minimal in terms of agricultural possibilities and clearly insufficient to support an application for an agricultural building.

The field access to the current proposal is directly opposite to an Area designated by Natural England as Environmentally Sensitive because of the need to protect the historic nature of its diversity.

The access itself is at the point in the lane where the characteristic deep-cut lane becomes even more narrow and drops down to the ancient stone packhorse bridge within Gypsy Hollow.

The access does not belong to the property of the Applicants who merely enjoy a right of way to access the grazing field.

This access was always historically a simple field access gate unintended for consistent use.

Furthermore the applicants have made absolutely no attempt whatsoever to comply with the Planning Conditions under SMD/2015/0434 relating to the ménage which included ¿Hedge and Plant Screening to South and West¿. The permission states that ¿planting would be required to effectively screen from view/intrusion both the finished menage and the associated works¿.

Indeed in total disregard of these said Planning Conditions and in disregard to the spirit of the permission previously granted by the planning Appeal to concede discrete low key small scale accommodation for the applicants¿ 3 horses, mirrors not included on the plans have been installed to the South and West which are now a focal point on this historic open hillside due to complete lack of any attempt at screening!

Application No SMD/2014/0063 stated at Applicants point 7 that ¿The stables are needed to provide shelter for the horses in bad weather and winter and the shed is needed to store tack, feed and equipment to maintain the horses and the land¿

The Planning Inspectorate in accepting that welfare was a justifiable reason for allowance of the stables/store shed in the Special Landscape Area, indicated that these were:-

¿no larger than would be necessary to provide stabling and storage for the horses that I saw on the site¿

(3 horses) and that

¿If too large, poorly located or of a prominent design the Council would be able to refuse permission¿.

and that

¿To ensure that equestrian activity as a result of the development remains low key and in keeping with

the rural character of the area its use needs to be restricted to private use¿.

The current Application is an attempt to further develop the site such that it would be:_

¿ Overdevelopment and Intensification on a small rural field of 4.8 acres

¿ Excessive to the sustainable use of the minimal remaining available land area

¿ Un-neccessarily and Prominently large scale to the permitted use of the site

¿ Incongruous to the rural and open nature of the Special Landscape Area

¿ An unwelcome and Intrusive development affecting the visual quality and amenity of this particularly desirable open location with views leading up to the renowned and historically important ridge border with PEAK NATIONAL PARK Boundary of ¿MORRIDGE TOP¿

¿ Contrary to the Planning Inspectorate comments in his aforesaid appeal decision that

¿ The Council¿s Landscape Character Assessment document identifies that the appeal site lies within an area described as ¿Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands¿. It advises that care should be taken to protect these areas from development. I agree with the Council that in practice this means that when development is necessary it should not take place in unduly prominent locations.¿

¿ Encouraging to the intensification of storage of equipment items including plant, diggers etc as used by the applicant in the course of his business and specifically excluded in the conditions

for existing permitted use, but in fact already regularly ignored by the applicants.

This would give further rise to the ongoing Enforcement difficulties encountered by the Council over the several years since the applicants became involved with the site.

¿ Detrimental to the public amenity of the open landscape and natural beauty which is enjoyed on a year

round basis by the people of Leek as restorative recreation in the form of walking, jogging, cycling, sightseeing, riding, and of course by the Town¿s important Economy of Tourism.

I sincerely hope that this further attempt to develop and intensively alter this open uplands pasturage will be firmly rejected in the interests of the community of Leek and of the future generations who will wish to enjoy protection of the historic and natural open qualities of this Special Landscape.