

11 Battlesteads
Alton

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Lisa Jackson
SMDC Planning Dept.

REF. PLANNING APPLICATION SMD/2020/0601
THE CEDARS, CEDAR HIL, ALTON

I wish to object to the above planning application on the following grounds:

1. ROAD – BATTLESTEADS/CEDAR HILL

The primary objection is the impact of extra traffic from the proposed new development on Battlesteads/Cedar Hill. The entrance to the proposed site is on one of the narrowest points of this road, on the brow of the hill where it slopes steeply down towards the village and on a blind bend. The road is already very dangerous and carries an unsuitable amount of traffic for its narrow, steep nature. There is no pedestrian pavement and anyone attempting to walk into the village takes their life in their hands : there is barely room for cars to pass and larger vehicles cannot do so without manoeuvring.

Prior to the Covid 19 Pandemic the amount of traffic had been increasing year on year with the increasing numbers of visitors to the Staffordshire Moorlands, in particular to Alton Towers. This will, inevitably, continue once the pandemic is defeated and we get back to normal. Drivers who know the area use Cedar Hill as a means of avoiding the traffic through the village, which potentially saves them time. Other drivers are increasingly sent this way by SatNavs, including some coaches and many large commercial vehicles.

It is worth mentioning here some important facts regarding Alton towers Resort:

- Alton Towers is a nationally important theme park
- It covers 914.3 acres
- In 2018 Alton Towers had 2.1 million visitors, expected to increase as the business grows
- Accommodation now consists of Alton Towers Hotel 180 rooms
Splash Landings Hotel 216 rooms
CBeebies Land Hotel 152 rooms
Enchanted Village Lodges 120
Tree Houses 5
Stargazing Pods 102

At full capacity this provides a **potential of more than 3100 visitors per night.**

- Other amenities are the Spa, numerous shops, bars and restaurants

- Historically Alton Towers has been seasonal opening from the middle of March to beginning of November. However, in recent years they have expanded activities, notably during February half-term and Christmas. The hotels are now open all year round. Large corporate events also take place on separate days e.g. Armed Forces Day and others. Occasionally live concerts are held, attracting thousands of visitors.

The logistics of the servicing and maintenance requirements of this very large enterprise are, therefore, enormous. Everything from food and beverage supplies, laundry, stock for the shops, maintenance supplies and engineering equipment has to be transported by road. Consequently, an increasing proportion of these vehicles use Cedar Hill to avoid the village congestion. The vehicles continue to get larger and more frequent. This is without taking into account other businesses in the area and visitor traffic.

All of these activities require very large numbers of staff, many of whom use Cedar Hill as their preferred route to work. Many of them are young and use the road like a race track.

Alton Towers is a major business and provides employment and benefits to the Staffordshire economy. However, it has a dire effect on the road system around Alton. The Draft Transport Moorlands District Integrated Strategy 2011-2026 recognised the challenge of minimising the impact of traffic generated by Alton Towers Resort.

Emergency vehicles also use Battlesteads/Cedar Hill as a quick way to bypass the village. All the Emergency Services are under continuous pressure to achieve the fastest possible times to locations to shorten response times and Alton Towers is clearly an important destination for them.

2. LANDSCAPE AND HISTORY

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CHARACTER ASSESSMENT STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS 2010. Appendix 1 Alton

This document makes clear the importance of the site in terms of heritage significance. Battlesteads/Cedar Hill is the boundary between two areas of designated heritage assets (See Map 1). ALHECZ4 – South of Toothill, is the area to the South of the road and ALHECZ3 – Toothill, is the area North of the road.

The proposed development site is in ALHECZ3. This area is classed as having High Evidential Value, High Historical value, High Aesthetic value and Medium Communal value. Map 4 shows the site is included in the area of Early Irregular Enclosure field pattern.

The document states that “The legible heritage assets also comprise the surviving field pattern and associated historic farmsteads which also contribute significantly to the local character of the wider area and to the sense of place”. It also says that “There have been only minimal 20th century alterations to the settlement and enclosure patterns”.

“There are several rights of way across the zone allowing the public to access the historic landscape and its contribution to the sense of place in what has been promoted by at least one walking guide as being the quieter side of Alton”.

The report recommends that distinctive historic landscape character and dispersed settlement

pattern should be maintained and conserved and that development within the zone should be managed through the planning system to **protect this fragile landscape**.

THE CEDARS FARMHOUSE is an imposing property built of stone in the early 1850s and the shed which is designated for removal in order to facilitate an access road for the new housing was probably built at the same time, as part of the farm buildings – the stone is the same. It certainly appears on the Ordnance Survey map of 1887. The 19th century barn (not a garage) and farmhouse are, therefore, important features of Cedar Hill and the proposed new development would be detrimental to the landscape and totally out of keeping with the area.

The applicant states that the new development would not be seen. This is not true as there are ancient footpaths crossing near the site, including part of the Staffordshire Way. The new houses would have a detrimental impact on the view from Toothill Rock, which belongs to the National Trust and is part of the Conservation Area, and also from Toothill Lane which is used by residents and walkers.

The applicant states that the site is an eyesore and should therefore be developed. However, the site could be tidied up and reinstated to useful agricultural land to conserve the historic landscape.

3. CONCLUSION

The above planning application should be **refused** because the access is unsuitable and the extra traffic generated on Cedar Hill would make the narrow road even more dangerous than it is now.

The historic landscape would be irrevocably harmed, as would the environment of The Cedars Farmhouse with the destruction of the 19th century barn.

Pamela R Brown