
From:
Sent: 14 May 2021 09:15
To:
Subject: Erection of stilted timber framed dwelling SMD/2021/0099

Dear Mr Swithenbank, please find below for your attention.

Introduction

I am writing to you as a local resident living in one of the properties closest to the site of the proposed dwelling. I am extremely concerned that this proposal perpetuates the gradual degrading of the landscape in the immediate area of Whiteshaw farm following the break up and sale of the farm around 5 years ago.

To suggest that the design is inspired by sailing shows complete ignorance of the nature of the area. Given how strongly I feel about this application, I have sought informal advice from a professional planner, so believe I am now aware of the matters which constitute a material planning consideration. This is reflected herein.

The application site is a small island of land (only 0.24 hectares in size); is surrounded on all sides by 60mph roads; and is covered in trees which are subject to a blanket TPO. The applicant is attempting to justify their proposal based on the policy exception - Paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Statement.

Highway safety/Access

On the question of road safety, the occasional visitor to the area could be forgiven for thinking this is a relatively tranquil corner of Staffs Moorlands but living close to the site I know differently. This junction can be busy with very regular traffic movements as it is on one of the main routes to access Tittesworth, the Roaches and of course Peak Park in general. All of the roads are national speed limit, even though none of them have white lines in the middle of the road. I understand it to be a government slow burn matter to reduce all such roads to 40mph which suggests, along with national statistics, that these are inherently dangerous. Probably in part due to the relatively open nature of the junction, ie much of the foliage is at tall tree height, plus very probably misreading of the junction layout, it is not at all uncommon for vehicles to cross the junction from Gun hill heading on down towards Rushton to not give way. Many locals know this and make allowances for it in the way they drive. The spectacle of a tree house would prove a major driver distraction and significantly increase the risk of collision. This would be further exacerbated by a new vehicle access. The so-called existing access was only created by the landowner around 18 months ago and as far as I have seen has only been used for people and digger access. I have never seen a road vehicle/car inside the gate. Scope inside the perimeter for parked cars will be very restricted leading to the risk of parking along the hazardous roadside and would be very dangerous especially at night.

Application Justification

As I understand it, the application seeks to justify the proposal based upon paragraph 79 of The Framework. Para. 79 states that isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided except where one of 5 circumstances (a-e) apply. Circumstances a – d do not apply. The application seeks to justify the proposal based on circumstance e), which requires a proposal to be of exceptional design and be:

‘truly outstanding or innovative, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; AND would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area’.

If the application is assessed based upon the policy criteria of paragraph 79:

Truly outstanding or innovative, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas.

In my view what is essentially, a wooden structure, for which the design has been dictated by the fact that the site is covered in protected trees, cannot be considered to be outstanding, innovative or of the highest of standards.....

Would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area

I fail to see how a house that is encroaching upon an area of dense tree cover can be considered to enhance its immediate setting and be sensitive to the characteristics of the area? Plus, as I have said already, lakes and sailing absolutely do not define this area.

To conclude, in my view the proposal does not meet any of the circumstances (a-e) set out under paragraph 79 of The Framework and represents an isolated home in the countryside which is contrary to planning policy.

Other material considerations

Gateway to PDNP

The site abuts the Peak District National Park boundary and would have a detrimental impact on the setting of this corner of the National Park adding to the desecration already taking place in that vicinity.

Impact on protected trees

The Arboricultural Implications Assessment itself states that the proposal presents ‘arboricultural challenges’. It states that a full and detailed arboricultural method statement will be required to support a planning application, but this has not been submitted. In addition, it states that the assessment has been prepared to inform the design and layout of potential development. Paragraph 4.1 states that when full plans become available and 7.1 states that the author was provided with initial sketch plans – it appears as if the report has not been written on the basis of the detailed proposals. I am concerned about the impact of the construction, as well as the long term impact on the well-being of the trees and the ability of the protected group of trees to thrive and grow naturally with natural regeneration with the proposed constraint of a dwelling in the middle!

Ecology

As far as I can see no ecological survey has been submitted. This structure will have significant impact on the ecosystem, particularly bats and birds.

I work quite extensively with Staffordshire Wildlife trust as a volunteer. I have had considerable involvement with the purchase of Gun Moor by the Trust and am actively involved in rewilding of this locality independently from the Trust, including the concept of wildlife corridors. This structure would be a regressive step to that work.

Amenity Space

As far as I can see there would be no useable garden area / amenity space for the dwelling, putting further pressure on the trees in the future to make space for the outdoor needs of a dwelling. The 'footprint' impact would be far larger than is suggested in the application and would inevitably lead to damage 'creep'.

To summarise, the proposal is contrary to planning policy, does not meet the requirements circumstance e of para 79 of 'The Framework', and in addition there are a number of material considerations which weigh against the proposal, including impact on the setting on the National Park, impact on protected trees, impact on ecology and particularly highway safety.

Yours faithfully,

David Brain

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