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To: [Planning Comments \(SMDC\)](#)
Subject: Comment Received from Public Access
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Application Reference No. : SMD/2022/0263 Site Address: PROPOSED FIELD ACCESS Mill Lane Wetley Rocks Staffordshire Comments by: Gavin Furnival

From:

The Croft
Mill Lane
Wetley Rocks
Wetley Rocks
Staffordshire
ST90BN

Phone:

Email:

Submission: Objection

Comments: Regarding the planning application for new field access to what is locally known as 'the Croft' field.

This field was formerly part of the adjacent Spring Cottage Farm, but that property and all other land that comprised the farm have since been sold off by the Biddulph family.

Some years ago I approached Christopher Biddulph seeking to purchase the approximate 0.17 acre field as it is also adjacent to my garden and field and would have been useful for my ongoing rare pig breeding hobby. To his credit Christopher made it clear at that time that it was his intention to gain planning permission for a residential development on the field to maximise its sale value. Whilst this was disappointing I can understand that as Christopher has no other agricultural or ecological interest in the field that maximum profit was a valid, if exploitative choice.

Also as a man with a interest in arboricultural matters myself I fully concur with the findings of Ben Williams of Tree Heritage Ltd and his tree report pertaining to the potential development of the field and the need to protect many of the valuable trees on the site.

As shown in the application, there remain two derelict trailer container units in the corner of the field and until 2 years ago Christopher had vehicular access from Mill Lane via a gate and the driveway of Spring Cottage Farm. But when given notice, by the then owner Dr Piggott he declined to respond or access the existing gated access.

Indeed although there still exists pedestrian access to the field through a gap in the hedge onto Mill Lane, which was used by Ben Williams to conduct the tree survey, the field has been left virtually undisturbed in the last ten years resulting in a decade of significant natural growth which has been impressive to see particularly in regard to the trees and wildlife.

That all said, and the true nature of the application made via Sammons Architectural of Leek on behalf of Christopher Biddulph made clear, I wish to raise the following concerns about the application in so much as it concerns the new field access.

Firstly and most obviously the field is agricultural land and yet Christopher Biddulph has, to my knowledge, rejected multiple purchase offers far exceeding any agricultural value it may ever have whether or not it has gated access from Mill Lane.

Secondly Mill Lane suffers from considerable traffic chaos throughout school term times with parents choosing to legally park their cars along the lane to drop off and collect their children. This turns some two hundred metres of Mill Lane into a single track lane to either side of St Johns Primary School and beyond the proposed new field access. Indeed the applaudable decision by Staffordshire County Council to place road calming measures along this section of Mill Lane has, whilst reducing traffic speed, led to several daily road blocks as parents and other drivers come head to head over this long section of lane. It can rightly be anticipated that further driveway/gateway access on this area of Mill Lane will only exasperate the ongoing issues and further impede local farmers from navigating the bottleneck to travel that is Mill Lane, Wetley Rocks.

Thirdly as ecologically/environmentally minded people my wife and I are aware that a significant number of bats roost in the Croft Field, particularly since the destruction of their habitats for the development of the old School House on Mill Lane and the barn conversions of Crickets Farm off Mill Lane, which eradicated (pre bat survey) many bat roosts.

Fourthly the 'Croft Field' albeit by neglect has become a long term nature reserve for numerous creatures including by observation, but not limited to, frogs, newts, field mice, hedgehogs, ground, hedge and tree nesting birds and small lizards.

So, in summary, the consent for new field access to the 'Croft Field' is by the applicants own admission for profit through staged application for residential development and as such is without merit, as indicated by the last ten years of neglect, unless the local authority anticipates consenting to the subsequent residential development of historically agricultural land when at least two local households have both previously and presently sought to purchase the field for agricultural purposes.

We can appreciate that this is predominantly an issue of development for financial benefit against preservation of nature and agriculture and that as time passes the former will generally overcome the latter but we only ask that you consider the merits of both sides. Particularly in the knowledge that local residential development requirements can still be met by consenting to brownfield site development such as opposite Bones Lane, Cheddleton and the planning consented multiple residential properties to be built further up Mill Lane opposite St Johns Church graveyard.

With thanks for the opportunity to convey our opinion,

Gav Furnival

Elsa Furnival

Joan Ward

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