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To: [Planning Comments \(SMDC\)](#)
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Application Reference No. : SMD/2022/0268 Site Address: Land At Blythe Park Sandon Road Cresswell
Staffordshire Comments by: Luke Emery

From:

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Submission: Objection

Comments: Dear Mr Haywood

Objection to Application for Reserved Matters SMD/2022/0268 ; Land at Blythe Park Development

Thank you for your efforts assembling and managing both this application and the inherently linked SMD/2022/0267 application through the planning portal on behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC). It is important that residents have access to, are informed of and can comment on such significant development within their area.

Recent discussion throughout the community, in the form of Parish Council meetings, meetings with concerned neighbours and impromptu discourse regarding these two submissions has consistently exposed feelings of confusion and opposition. Sentiments with which I can fully relate. In my objection to this application, SMD/2022/0268, I echo and fully support the concerns that residents of the hamlet of Cresswell and surrounding villages have articulated so well concerning the aesthetic, internal access, landscaping, layout, scale, and perhaps most importantly, precedent.

The proposed housing appears a far cry from what would be expected of a rural hamlet in the Staffordshire Moorlands. In the attached report, it is noted that chimneys were added to address continuity with local architecture however there are more pressing concerns with the designs which are not addressed.

 

Most apparent of all the issues with the housing provision is the presence of three storey buildings, a scale which is not demonstrated anywhere else within the boundary of Cresswell; in fact, when one considers the housing stock within the borders of Cresswell, Draycott-in-the-Moors and Totmonslow a significant number are single storey or bungalow type dwellings, approximately 99 properties off the main thoroughfares in those areas. Not only is this design choice not in keeping with the scale found in the locality, the location of the two buildings at the entrance of the proposed estate appears to contradict an established precedent whereby homeowners in the properties immediately adjacent to the existing layby, the proposed location of the apartment buildings, are not permitted to build higher than a bungalow type property.

The SMDC design guide, point 3.8. states that ;A new building should respect the scale of those surrounding

it, this is especially significant given that the entrance which these buildings create a gateway to is located in the heart of the hamlet, central to the residential area and therefore in close proximity to other buildings; following the contours of Sandon Road towards the south, the next properties are single storey bungalow type designs and opposite are a series of post-war two storey properties which are neither respected in style nor scale by the imposing and largely featureless design of the three storey apartments. Section 3.2. of the same design guide, which is informed by the local policy for Design Considerations (DC1) and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), emphasises that buildings in countryside locations should sit comfortably in the landscape and that a good design would be seen to be emulating the horizontal, ground hugging form of traditional buildings, which appears to be the antithesis of what is being proposed.

Section 7.1. of the Draycott-in-the-Moors Neighbourhood Plan Design Code by AECOM states, in specific relation to the proposed western field residential development, that 'Building heights should respond to the typical building heights within the existing settlement, adhering to a maximum of two storeys.'

The weight of the location of this proposed residential area must be considered appropriately; this is the heart of a small, quiet hamlet and thus will affect a great amount of the surrounding population, this is not a scenario akin to the development in Leekbrook where developers were practically in the position to set the architectural tone for an almost entirely new settlement. It is due to these factors that planners should be especially prudent when exercising their duty with development in this area; there is precedent established and published for plans to be recommended for refusal on grounds such as a feature, for example the proposed roof for the Guild Hall in Cheadle, not being in keeping with its surroundings, it is important that the special character of an area is preserved as progress is made.

From the document titled 'Cresswell House Type Planning Drawings', it is evident that some of these designs have little in common with anything that is seen in the region. The aesthetic of the apartment buildings is more commonly found in large conurbations like Stafford and other urbanised environments, with multiple features foreign to Cresswell.

 

Addressing the layout, the spacing between the greater part of the dwellings is unlike that in the majority of Cresswell, this is especially apparent around the properties in the south western area that consists of the 'Brocton' design, which promotes a claustrophobic atmosphere and that of overdevelopment when compared to the wider settlement of Cresswell including Rookery Crescent and Sandon Road where the large gaps promote the green spaces and soft landscaping between and behind buildings. Section 3.4. of the design guide discusses the relationship of buildings to one another and how this 'creates a sense of rhythm, balance and good neighbourliness that should be maintained', enhancing the gaps between the buildings would be more in keeping with the balance of structure to land ratio that is seen throughout the settlement. Staffordshire Moorlands is recognised for its high-quality natural environment and, as discussed in section 2.4., the development should protect and enhance the landscape character and assimilate into the landscape.

In a rural location like the hamlet of Cresswell, landscaping and especially soft landscaping is very important. Section 4.6. of the design guide emphasises that good landscaping should not be regarded as an afterthought. Unfortunately, that appears to not be the case in the proposals, with an overwhelming amount of hard landscaping in over two thirds of the proposed site, lacking in the green verges, hedges and central greens that are common throughout the locality and indeed wider area. Any significant soft landscaping is located to the east of the site and bordering the landfill and industrial area. Credit is due where it is deserved, and it is good to see trees planted around the site and in a manner consistent with surrounding residential areas which feature trees in front gardens. It is concerning that the plans appear to demonstrate the removal of mature trees, identified as Birch, Elder and Willow, at the southern site border with Rookery Crescent; these trees are not identified in the plans as ones scheduled to be removed but nor are they identified as retained trees.

The aforementioned trees are located along a perimeter that is specifically identified in the Draycott-in-the-Moors Neighbourhood Plan Design Code, section 7.1., as a necessary landscape buffer; the report goes on to state that 'Future development of the site should include landscape buffers to reduce the visual impact of development on the surrounding landscape'. There appears to be no real consideration of a landscape buffer between the proposed development and existing dwellings with many homeowners now facing the prospect of housing being placed directly upon their border, which is currently shared with undeveloped, natural greenfield. This is seemingly a contradiction with section 7.1. which explicitly identifies that 'Landscape buffers should be provided between any proposed housing and the existing settlement area'.

Concerns regarding the internal access have been conveyed thoroughly at other points during the planning process, and it is imperative that these plans are viewed as part of a bigger picture and not in isolation, the shared access for both industrial and residential traffic is perplexing. The Department for Transport figures estimate that each household, outside of London, has on average 1.3 vehicles and in a rural area like Cresswell, which is infamously poorly connected by public transport links, it is not unreasonable to assume that this figure may be higher; is this single thoroughfare offering potential new residents an acceptable level of amenity, access, and safety? In the age of 'just in time' supply chains and recent proposals for a large manufacturing facility to take residence at the eastern development site, the residents of the western site may be subjected to volumes and frequencies of large vehicles, in some cases little more than the width of a footpath away from their house, that may not make for an appealing nor healthy place to live.

The proposal to include a footpath through Sandon Close is harmful to the levels of amenity enjoyed in what is, quite rightly so, a quiet corner of Cresswell which experiences little in the way of foot traffic other than from individuals with a purpose for being in that location.

Once again, now a common theme in correspondence regarding the development in Cresswell, it must be emphasised that precedent is important. Thus far, this letter has discussed established precedent; that which exists affecting the permitted scale of existing dwellings bordering the proposed site; that which has been seen as reasoning for refusal of other local planning; but it is immeasurably valuable to also consider what precedent could be set by permitting this development.

If this plan were successful, it could make it difficult to refuse development that does not promote the principles and values of the SMDC design guide in other areas of Cresswell. It may establish the impression that three storey dwellings are permissible across other rural hamlets in the district: apartments towering over Upper Hulme and Farley or town houses in Totmonslow. It may lead to developers seeking to exploit the natural landscape for which the Staffordshire Moorlands is both renowned and respected; the very reason that so many people love to live in, work in and visit our county.

The design guide makes it clear that the proposal cannot be viewed in isolation but must be considered holistically as part of the surrounding settlement. It embraces the forward-looking ambition of the NPPF and DC1 for good design and planning to positively make places better for people. These goals are not too dissimilar to those held by our community, a community with a demonstrable record of welcoming well-reasoned and sensible development across Cresswell, Draycott-in-the-Moors and Totmonslow; it is not only about what gain a development can get from our area but what gain our area can get from a development too, how Cresswell can be enhanced in a manner of development that is sympathetic to the landscape, the environment and the architecture as is promoted so well in local policies, guides and design codes.

I object to this application for Reserved Matters, reference SMD/2022/0268 due to multiple factors of design, aesthetic, layout and scale that are not in keeping with the surrounding settlement; due to landscaping neither

meeting the criteria of the neighbourhood plan nor being appropriate for a rural location; due to the affect to amenity imposed by layout, internal access, and scale of the proposed site. And I urge all those accountable across the entire scope of the planning process to consider the importance of precedent when exercising their duty.

Yours sincerely

Luke Emery

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