

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Planning Department
Moorlands House
Stockwell Street
Leek

Meadow View Bungalow
Cedar Hill
Alton
Staffs
ST10 4BQ

September 16th 2022

Dear Sir /Madam

Planning application: SMD/2022/0409

Land off Cedars Hill, Alton, Staffs, ST10 4BQ

We wish to register our objection to the above planning application for the following reasons:

- **The landscape**

As owner of the property Meadow View bungalow which is positioned on the opposite side of the road to the entrance to the field that we understand once again is the subject of a planning application. We are hoping that the application is refused (as was the application in 1996 and more recently 2020).

My memories of the area around Cedar Hill and Battlesteads and the field are based on my childhood living at the Cedars Farm (which is also opposite the meadow) throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

The field has been a grazing meadow for generations and due to the contours of the ground, its elevated position and the steep slopes has never been intensively farmed. Consequently, this has made a good sward for both insect life and small mammals such as the common field vole.

This particular field also has the ruins of the old Brickworks which dates back to the early 1900s and is situated at the western side of the field. The remains of the old Brickworks are an ideal location for both nesting and roosting birds of prey i.e. Owls and Kestrels.

At a time when the environment has never been so important it would be an extremely negative move to lose this area of landscape and countryside which borders National trust ground immediately to the north i.e. Toothill Wood and Toothill Rock. To the east the proposal site borders the Alton and Farley Conservation area.

With respect to the environment, people, wildlife and vehicle access this is certainly not the correct location for such a development.

- **The Preliminary Ecological Report**

Item 1: Net gain is mentioned on numerous occasions but never is a value stated. What percentage value of ecological net gain is required by SMDC and the NPPF, this should be made clear and unambiguous.

Item 2: Page 7 (Habitats) Section 4.2.4 the report states;

“All of the hedgerows on the site were species-poor”.

The total area of the field is approx. 6.5 acres, it has a border of almost 760 metres of ancient hedgerow and trees and has another 100 metres of hedgerow running north to south across the field. How this can be described as ‘species-poor’ is unbelievable.

Item 3: Page 10, Section 4.8.3 the report states “The majority of trees on site are less than 15 years old and lack features but 13 trees along the riverbank were identified as having potential roost features (PRFs) (Table 1)”

There is no river and hence no riverbank in the field.

How can this report be relied upon to make an informed decision?

The field has been used for grazing for decades and the tree stock is certainly above 15 years old. Any trees less than 15 years old should be identified in the report.

Comments regarding the Location Plan & Indicative Layout Site Plan.

The scale used for the cross-section (lower left-hand corner) indicate that the new dwellings are to be 10 metres up from the road level.

If this scale is correct then the 2 middle houses will look down and dwarf our bungalow. The new dwellings will be overbearing and intrusive. Every time a car or vehicle manoeuvres headlights will shine straight into our bungalow, this light pollution will have a serious and detrimental impact on our livelihood and wellbeing.

- **The field boundary**

It is understood that 86 metres of field boundary, most of which is immediately opposite our bungalow, it to be removed to create a new access point and visibility splay. The field boundary comprises an ancient dry-stone wall and mature hedgerow. It is close to Alton’s conservation area and has enclosed cattle for hundreds of years, it is an integral part of the medieval landscape and should be protected under the same policy’s used to protect ancient woodland. The hedgerow is also a vital habit for numerous wildlife including invertebrates, mice, butterfly’s, nesting birds and being long and straight it is perfect for commuting and foraging bats.

The field boundary is an irreplaceable habitat and should be retained at all costs.

- **The highway (C 65)**

The highway that is Cedar Hill and Battlesteads (C 65) is a dangerous, hazardous fast stretch of road with no footpath on either side of the road (total distance of approx. 620 m) making this the most dangerous road for pedestrians in Alton village. The proposed site entrance is located at the top of a blind brow of Cedar Hill which is arguable the most dangerous stretch of road due to its east / west alignment and the impact on driver visibility due to sunrise and low sunsets. Very few motorists adhere to the speed limit which makes the road dangerous and the potential for accidents is exacerbated by the volume of traffic that uses the road to access/exit the village.

It would be irresponsible to ignore what the residents of Alton, Cedar Hill and Battlesteads have continually stated in their objection letters regarding the obvious dangers of this country lane which is less than 5 m wide in places. This is especially significant when we consider the safety of any child walking to school.

From the site of the proposed development to St Peters CE First School Alton is a distance of approx. 0.60 miles (970 m). Therefore, the distance is less than the 'statutory walking distance' which is 2 miles for a child under the age of 8 years, and 3 miles for children age 8 – 16 years. If this route to school from Cedar Hill was subject to assessment to consider free school transport it would be judged as hazardous and dangerous because there is no continuous adequate footway, no recognised point to cross the road for pedestrians and no road markings. Also, the street lighting is totally inadequate increasing the risk for children especially when we consider most school uniforms are traditionally dark grey, black and navy.

We are reliably informed from an objection letter (13.05.2020) to SMD/2019/0555 that Cedar Hill was identified for a road widening scheme in 1937 but due to the outbreak of the second world war in 1939 the improvements were never carried out. 85 years later the road is woefully inadequate and highly dangerous. Where else in the Moorlands or indeed Staffordshire would such a narrow, busy and dangerous road be deemed a suitable route for children and other pedestrians to share with fast moving vehicles?

The hazards of the road have been well documented in many of the objection letters for each application in 1976 and 2019 (SMD/1996/0177 and SMD/2019/0555 respectively). Please don't ignore what Alton residents keep saying; the road is hazardous and cannot support the demands of any development. Please do not ignore the obvious hazards this country lane presents; a pedestrian's safety, a pedestrian's life could be lost if this application is approved.

We appreciate that there is a need for more housing but it must be in a suitable location and be sustainable. However, we trust common sense will prevail and the application will be refused for all of the reasons stated by Planning Officer when determining application SMD/2019/0555 in Dec 2020.

Therefore, for the reasons stated we would like to reiterate our total opposition to application SMD/2022/0409.

Thank you.

Mr and Mrs N.C. Brandrick

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Cedar Hill

Alton

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