

Re: - Application Number: SMD/2023/0653

Applicant Name: Matt Potts on behalf of Leek Cricket Club

Please Note: -

The letter from SMDC stated that the above planning application would be available to view online at www.staffordshiremoorlands.gov.uk. This website was not available on the 22nd of February when I attempted to view the application, the website was offline for “essential maintenance” until the 27th of February, the date identified on your letter as the deadline for any response to the application. I spoke to SMDC customer service who confirmed that the submission date would be extended to reflect this.

To Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

From Mr and Mrs A O Posthuma

We write to object to the proposed Development SMD/2023/0653 on Bank Farm Field owned by Leek Cricket Club, and specifically the relocation of the existing Equestrian Shelter and associated construction of a new road.

Objections and comments listed below.

Our key objection is to the planned “new road” which would start from the existing field gate at the bottom of the very steep hill to the proposed stables at the top of the hill. Creation of this road would require extensive excavation to overcome the challenging topography of this site. The extremely steep gradient would require substantial groundworks to create a new road to service the proposed equestrian shelter (stables).

Historic Environment: - This site, Bank Farm Field, is ‘an area of special historical interest’, as such SMDC will have a legal duty of care to protect and preserve the appearance of the landscape here. This site has been identified as a “low” or “burial mound” and is known by local historians, residents and journalists as “The Hill.” Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society have been approached to formally comment on the significance of this site prior to any groundwork commencing. An informed opinion has suggested that an independent Archaeological Evaluation /Assessment of the site be conducted along with an Archaeological Watching Brief of any exploratory excavation. It would be a serious dereliction of SMDC’s responsibilities to allow the destruction of this historical asset in order to provide a service road to a stable block.

Alternative access: if new stables were to be erected as proposed, at the top of Bank Farm Field, there is a limited area that might be suitable for equestrian usage, the very top flat section, adjacent to the cricket ground. A road to access the proposed site would be more suitably and sustainably created from the Cricket Club car park rather than transversing the lengthy steep slope of ‘The Hill’, Bank Farm Field.

If a revised application were to be submitted for stables as suggested here with an alternative access and service road via the cricket club rather than the field gate at Bridge End, significant local objections and disquiet about the current application might be averted.

Existing Provision: the existing stables on this site are dilapidated and water-logged for much of the year but could be rebuilt if drainage systems, sub structure and foundations were engineered and -constructed to accommodate a new stable block on the existing site.

In conclusion Whilst the re-siting of this stable block might seem a relatively minor matter in planning terms, the provision of a new service road to it of the scale intended, joined to a route on the strategic road network which carries a heavy weight of traffic, and across a site of significant historical interest, is another matter completely. The disproportionate impact and potential future planning implications render the application unrealistic in the terms in which it is couched.

Given the contentious and potentially far-reaching nature of this application, it is our expectation that the members of the Planning Committee will wish to visit this site when the disproportionate impact of this application will be apparent.