
From: planningcomments@staffs Moorlands.gov.uk
Sent: 07 July 2025 15:24
To: Planning Comments (SMDC)
Subject: Comment Received from Public Access

Categories:

Application Reference No. : SMD/2025/0237 Site Address: Side Farm Cotton Bank Cotton Staffordshire ST10 3DU
Stoke On Trent Comments by: Graeme EnnisN/A

From:

Rock Cottage
Garston
Whiston
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ST10 2HX

Phone:

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Submission: Objection

Comments: Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to formally object to the planning application submitted by Mr and Mrs for the development of a glamping site at Side Farm, Cotton Bank.

My objection is based on the following concerns:

1. Unsafe and Unsuitable Access

The proposed development is accessed via a narrow, single track country lane with multiple blind bends and limited passing places. This track is unsuitable for increased traffic volumes and poses significant safety risks, particularly for:

- Pedestrians and dog walkers - the route is frequently used as a public footpath by locals who allow dogs off leads for long stretches.
- Emergency and service vehicles - limited visibility and passing places make it difficult for large vehicles to manoeuvre or pass safely.

The track lacks adequate infrastructure for commercial use. Its condition (including a gravelled section) raises serious concerns about ongoing maintenance responsibilities, particularly if traffic increases due to guest arrivals,

deliveries and waste collection. As the applicant is not responsible for maintaining the full length of the access track, any increased wear and tear from their commercial development would unfairly shift the burden of upkeep onto other users. The resulting damage caused by guest traffic – particularly from vehicles unfamiliar with the track – would lead to increased maintenance costs for neighbouring residents, despite the applicant being the sole commercial beneficiary.

Visibility is severely restricted by dry stone walls and overgrown foliage, making the route hazardous. There are minimal places to safely pass without reversing long distances. This increases the risk of accidents, near misses, and potential damage to adjacent farmland, especially between the two cattlegrids known locally as "the moor". Already, my property adjacent to the track is being used as an informal passing place – an issue that has worsened since the applicants took ownership, with an increase in speeding delivery vehicles and visitors. We have previously attempted to discourage this by placing cones along the boundary, but drivers have simply exited their vehicles to move the cones and use my property as a passing area regardless. This disregard for private boundaries highlights the lack of control the applicants will have over guest behaviour and further demonstrates how unsuitable this track is for increased traffic.

2. Conflict with National Planning Policy (NPPF 110 - 112)

This development potentially conflicts with key paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework.

- Paragraph 110: requires developments to provide safe and suitable access for all users. In this case, the proposed site is only accessible by car via a narrow private track. The track is designated as a public footpath and does not permit cycling. There is no provision for public transport, cycle access, or pedestrian access, meaning the development fails to support inclusive and sustainable travel options.

- Paragraph 111: states that development should be refused if it causes an unacceptable impact on highway safety or severe residual cumulative impact. With minimal passing bays and a heavy pedestrian presence, the impact here would be severe.

- Paragraph 112: Requires priority for sustainable transport and accessibility for all. This proposal fails both - the site is only accessible by car.

3. Legal and Ownership Considerations

While the applicant appears to own part of the access track - something we are yet to see proof of - they do not own it in its entirety. The route is a shared private access and, under the Whiston Enclosures Award of 1815, it is designated as a private or occupation road for the use of landowners and occupiers adjacent to it, with a private right of way along its full length. This means anyone with land adjacent to it has the right to traverse the track on foot, hoof or wheel, but the general public are only permitted to walk along it. Such a development could call into question the legalities of the track being used for commercial activities not agreed to by all affected parties.

It is acknowledged that an existing holiday let on the property was granted permission in 2003 which would establish limited commercial use. However, this does not justify the intensification of traffic associated with a larger glamping

development. The track remains narrow, unlit, and unsuitable for significant increases in vehicular movement, especially given its designation as a public footpath and the continued absence of adequate passing places.

There was an application in 2001 made to upgrade the track from a footpath to a bridle path - refused on pedestrian safety grounds. An increase in vehicle numbers beyond what was originally permitted would only amplify the dangers already recognised in that decision.

As mentioned above, the private access track contains a public right of way designated exclusively as a footpath, on which cycling is not permitted. Nevertheless, the proposed development includes provision for bike storage. Given the absence of any suitable or safe cycle routes on the applicants property, it is unclear why cycling is being encouraged as part of this proposal.

The applicants will be unable to enforce speed limits or safely manage vehicle movements.

As mentioned, the access track is a narrow, winding with limited visibility. Although the applicant has indicated outside of the application that they will look to install speed safety signs to encourage slower driving, this unlikely to be effective. There are already several speed bumps and 10mph signs in place along the track, yet these are routinely ignore by delivery drivers and visitors.

Without any means of enforcement or supervision, the applicants will have no control over how fast guests, service vehicles or delivery drivers travel. Once on the track, unfamiliar drivers are likely to disregard signage, particularly when running late or navigating the route for the first time. The applicant has provided no clear plan for managing vehicle movements beyond signage, which has already proven ineffective. This creates a significant safety risk for other track users - including pedestrians, dog walkers, children, and local residents - and increases the likelihood of accidents, particularly on blind corners. It also undermines the tranquillity and safety that those living along the track currently enjoy.

Impact on Rural Character, Environment and Residential Amenity

This peaceful and unspoilt area will be materially affected by:

- Increased traffic noise from unfamiliar guests arriving and leaving at all hours (the applicant can control check in times, but cannot completely control vehicular movement thereafter)
- Light pollution from vehicle headlights
- Disturbance from guests engaging in outdoor leisure activities
- The development will not conserve the natural environment of their land and surrounding area, and will erode the tranquility valued by local residents.

Currently, only 8 residents live along this track. According to the report published by Glampitect, the development will attract up to an additional 16 people per night, tripling the local population, which is disproportionate and inappropriate for this rural setting.

The same report lists a number of local tourist attractions, yet only one is realistically accessible on foot from the proposed site. This means guests would be heavily reliant on car travel, leading to increased vehicle usage.

The reports highlight that the development will impact the lowland meadow habitat on-site and recommend that a precautionary development plan should be implemented to minimize harm to the habitats. However, the application lacks clear, detailed proposals for such a plan, leaving significant uncertainty about how effectively these ecological impacts will be mitigated.

It should also be noted that all the reports appear to have been conducted in February, the coldest time of year locally, when naturally fewer people and vehicles are present. This potentially targeted seasonal timing likely underestimates the true volume of traffic and pedestrian use during warmer months, meaning the actual impact of the proposed development could be significantly greater than the reports suggest.

Cumulative Development and Need

The forthcoming Moneystone Quarry development is approved and located less than three miles from the proposed glamping site. It includes extensive holiday accommodation as well as indoor and outdoor leisure facilities. This larger development will deliver around 250 jobs, generate over £1 million in annual local spending, and substantially address tourism demand in the area.

In comparison, there is no clear justification for an additional glamping operation in a less accessible location served by a single-track rural lane. It is concerning that Glampitect's report entirely omits consideration of the quarry's proximity and impact, undermining the accuracy of their assessment.

Impact on Utilities

The proposed development raises serious concerns regarding the local water supply infrastructure. In particular:

- Water demand from Side Farm is likely to increase significantly with the introduction of guest accommodation, especially during peak occupancy. This will have a direct impact on the supply to neighbouring Cotton Back Farm who rely on the same water source.
- Any reduction in water pressure or availability would negatively impact the residents of Cotton Bank Farm.
- No clear evidence has been provided in the application to demonstrate how the applicants will ensure that water usage for the proposed glamping business will not negatively impact other properties that share the supply.

- Given the remote location there is uncertainty around the capacity of existing infrastructure to support additional usage. It is unclear whether any assessment has been carried out by Severn Trent Water.

In summary, without guarantees or detailed evidence that the water supply to existing properties will remain unaffected, this proposal introduces an unacceptable level of risk to neighbouring households.

Response to the Applicants' Supplementary Statement

While I acknowledge the applicants' passion for living in and preserving the natural beauty of the Staffordshire Moorlands, their planning statement raises several important issues that remain unaddressed:

Access and Traffic Concerns: Despite their assurance to use only small delivery vehicles and careful construction methods, the narrow single-track farm access (Cotton Bank) remains unsuitable for any increased vehicular use associated with a glamping site. The track's multiple blind bends, limited passing places, and high pedestrian usage make intensified traffic unsafe. The applicants' statement does not explain how visitor traffic – including guests' personal vehicles, deliveries, and waste collection – will be managed to mitigate these risks.

Impact on Environment and Habitat: The applicants express a desire to protect the surrounding nature, particularly Cotton Dell. However, the proposed development will inevitably increase footfall and vehicular disturbance near sensitive habitats, including the lowland meadow on-site. Mitigation plans are not clearly detailed, and the ecological risks remain significant.

Tourism and Sustainability Claims: While they reference proximity to attractions such as Alton Towers and the Churnet Valley Railway, the reality is that only one local attraction is accessible on foot from the site, meaning visitors will rely heavily on cars. This undermines claims of sustainability and 'car-free' enjoyment of nature.

Community and Residential Impact: The applicants' desire to be part of the local community is noted; however, the increased noise, traffic, and disturbance resulting from the glamping pods will negatively affect existing residents who currently enjoy the peace and quiet of the area. The two other properties that share this track also moved here seeking tranquility, and despite all assurances, we do not believe that our current peaceful way of life can be maintained with up to an additional 16 cars potentially driving up and down the track throughout the day and night.

Conclusion

For all the reasons stated above – particularly due to the unsafe, substandard access track, conflict with national planning policy, and detrimental effect on residential amenity – I respectfully urge the council to refuse this application.

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