
From: planningcomments@staffs Moorlands.gov.uk
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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: David Williams

From:

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Submission: Objection

Comments: I am objecting to this application on the following grounds.

- 1) Environmental Impact
- 2) Access and Highway Safety
- 3) Over capacity of visitor accommodation provision in the immediate local area
- 4) Impact /Harm to local Amenity and Character of the landscape.

Details of reservations and concerns..

1.The additional number of visitors using the verandas and hot tubs attached to the exterior each pod, will impact upon the tranquility of the local environment with increased noise and light pollution.

The use of hot tubs and their associated chemical release into the local environment will potentially concentrate and impact upon local watercourses and put at serious risk the integrity of the local SSI and the nature reserve at Cotton Dell by virtue of the drainage patterns in the local hydrology.

This vulnerability of subsurface pathways was vividly illustrated in the past 6 weeks when a sizeable fire at Winterton's Works off Ellastone road situated on higher ground to the north of the application site, and approximately less than a mile away, required the intervention by 8 separate fire units and crews . The use of extensive amounts of water to quell and subdue the fire resulted in a high volume of surface water from the site draining into the under ground systems feeding into the streams and channels of Upper Cotton to the south east, to

the extent that days afterwards the Cotton Brook stream flowing through the nature reserve was turned dark black with the residue washed out from the fire site.

Because of their nature the chemicals in hot tubs have to be replaced on a regularly weekly or less, and there appears be no special provision contained within the documentation for the safe disposal of the waste water from them to mitigate against seepage into the natural drainage patterns of the surrounding area, or alternative soakaways to prevent chemical residues from filtering into the flow pathways feeding down into the stream that dominates the reserve at Cotton Dell.

2. Access to the site is very limited by the narrowness of the long, private track/ roadway that provides it. It is crucial too for the other, very few household properties entitled to use it. Increased traffic volume would significantly impact upon the current users and pedestrians using the popular footpath as there are no passing places for additional vehicles and currently very little traffic.

Staffordshire County Council have rejected any plans to upgrade its status on safety grounds and have cautioned against the risk of obstructing the footpath.

Indeed, regrettably, it is wrong to say that in support of the Council's objective to reduce reliance on private car travel, the proposed glamping site will not promote sustainable transport options and go against the council's aim to minimise the need for car use. The site may be accessible on foot and by bicycle, or a hub for such, but the main form of transport for initial access and egress at any time for the users will always be by car, as unfortunately, as with all the other multiple tourist sites in the moorlands area, there are very limited (if any) direct links to bus routes or other local transport networks and community amenities via the existing public right- of-way network.

3. Contrary to the supplementary reports in support of the viability and need for the development, the applicant and agents have not appreciated the impact upon the local area of the increased tourist trade and expansion of accommodation provision already established in line with Council policies.

In the last 15 years Staffordshire Moorlands District Council has permitted such an expansion of small and large scale provision at local sites for camping, caravan, glamping, yurt and lodges accommodation, that there is no longer the justifiable demand for additional provision in this area.

The need for such accommodation is no longer warranted given the successful establishment of a variety of them at Rue hill camp site, The Cross Inn Caravan Park at Cauldon Low, The Star Caravan and Camping Site at Cotton itself, the all season Ramshorn Estate Woodland lodge retreat site and the newly proposed and granted 250 lodge and leisure site at Moneystone, all of which lie within a two mile radius of the application site. In addition a mile further on, there is the huge Alton Towers Resort with its spa, hot tubs, hotels and over 500 woodland lodges, luxury treehouses, and star gazing pods, all available for short and long stay patrons.

4 There are serious concerns about the change of use of the land upon which the development will be based and its overall effect in terms of the modern design and use of materials within the contrasting traditional classification of the landscape and local buildings.

Primarily the field has been in agricultural usage since enclosure. However this proposal would involve a new type of use for the land for a start and because of its uniformity and the regimented nature of design and layout, together with the use of non traditional building material, it represents a complete departure from, or contrast to the usual appearance in its overall visibility within the characteristic landscape that surrounds it, and thus it has to be viewed as intrusive to a greater degree than the specifications and documentary texts would imply.

Even the attempts at screening the site will offer a contrasting and more detectable type of vegetative or arboreal cover than the more open views of a traditional stone walled rough pasture that typifies the locality adjacent to the access lane.

In terms of the impact upon wider the landscape, the claims that in the design consideration and setting (ref local policy DC1 and DC3) the proposed glamping site is designed to be sensitive to its rural surroundings while reinforcing the local distinctiveness of the Staffordshire Moorlands, are questionable.

While the pods may be constructed using high-quality, sustainable materials that are intended to complement the natural landscape and respect the area's heritage, a combination of timber cladding and natural finishes, regrettably, does not reflect the local character of building design.

Rather, their sleek, repetitive architectural shape while attempting to minimise their visual impact, is actually more noticeable for its congruity as opposed to a more random or piecemeal design usually associated with isolated farms of long standing found elsewhere in the wider landscape of this area.

Indeed the LPA's character type landscapes which is used in planning assessments, defines the area as being

typical of the established historic landscapes found in the Staffordshire Moorlands, that is to say, comprising a mixture of gritstone uplands with dissected sandstone cloughs and valleys with drystone walls and stone buildings occupying settled plateau farmland and slopes. The surrounding areas are generally open and mainly undeveloped, which factors contribute to the visual character of the isolated settlements, the original field patterns and enclosures against which the development of this site must be carefully assessed.

Because it sits in a broad valley with extensive views out, as shown in the landscape images provided in the documentation,

it has to be remembered that, conversely, its locality also allows the public to enjoy significant views in from the extensive higher ground to the north and that the effect upon that of any new development, or change of land use, has to be appropriately considered within the context of altering the traditional landscape.

This is a radical change of land use in a traditional setting and its modern visual impact will stand out against that background.

All of these factors must be properly weighed in the planning balance, especially the question whether yet another holiday or short stay facility is really needed in this particular location or setting, given that it is already surrounded by a plethora of various holiday accommodation so close by, and yet it remains one of the uniquely, unspoilt valleys in the immediate area, sitting in its own historic landscape and therefore that isolation gives it the intrinsic, extra value that should not be altered or lost by this proposal.

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