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From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
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Application Reference No. : SMD/2025/0385

Site Address: Higherland Farm Caverswall Common Lane Caverswall Staffordshire ST11 9EU Stoke-On-Trent

Comments by: Mr & Mrs Powell

From:
Meadow View/ Rose Cottage
Sandy Lane
Caverswall Common
S-o-T

Phone:

Email: [REDACTED]

Submission: Objection

Comments: Objection to Planning Application SMD/2025/0385 ĳ Higherland Farm

To whom it may concern,

We would like to register our strong formal objection to the planning application for Higherland Farm, Caverwall Common, based on a number of reasons.

Objection 1 ĳ Highway Safety and Traffic Generation

The application references other businesses in the area and we would like to highlight these as a reason for the rejection of this application. There is an over saturation of businesses in the local area and the roads would not be able to cope with the increased traffic flow, especially from the size of vehicles that are expected to attend the site. Specifically, they reference Stone Valley who are already well established in the area and have their own access road from the main road (A520) due to the danger the size of their vehicles poses to the residents and local infrastructure. There would not be the ability to do something similar for the applicant's site. The site will be inaccessible to these large vehicles during the winter due to the lack of gritting and we are prone to flooding on some of the roads, making it unsafe for residents let alone extra traffic flow and big vehicles. Attempting to access the site in poor weather again poses safety concerns for residents.

If the applicants are already experienced in this industry, why would they select a site with such poor access for big vehicles? The blind bend at the bottom of Gravelly Bank is dangerous enough for your average family vehicle to pass each other, the idea that there are regularly much larger vehicles passing through it is, frankly, terrifying. There are regular horse riders using the road and we dread to think of the consequences of one of these riders being taken out by a 7.5t or 18t truck. The laws of probability will ensure that their meeting on these roads happens on a fairly regular basis and thus increasing the potential for that meeting to end in tragedy which is completely avoidable. Not to mention the cyclists and walkers often found on these small country roads too.

It would be impossible to stop vehicles from accessing the site from the A50 direction via Caverswall. This would lead to a heavier traffic flow through the small village, past the local primary schools at potentially peak school times. There would be an increase in traffic using Handley Bank where ordinary sized vehicles struggle to pass each other on most of that road.

Add to this that the condition of the local roads is not high quality currently, with large potholes and overgrown hedges. The increase of traffic flow and, in particular, the weight of many of those new vehicles would have a severe cumulative impact the roads locally and become an additional financial burden on the local authority maintaining those roads.

Objection 2 ĳ Highway Safety (specific to Sandy Lane)

Setting the context, these applicants have already shown a callous disregard for the safety of other community members with their recent renovations of the perimeter wall of their property. They have built it higher and wider than the previous boundary wall and this now blocks the view of vehicles exiting Sandy Lane. This forces residents and users of Sandy Lane to pull further into the road and has already caused a number of

near accidents; with one of our visitors reporting, just the other day, that they nearly had a fast-moving car run into them, as they pulled forward far enough to see past this wall. This is a common problem for ourselves and visitors, plus it has been commented on by other users of Sandy Lane. We are wondering if the council will wait for a bad accident to happen before taking action against this safety concern and suspected contravention of planning consent. Helpfully, Google maps (images on the emailed in version of these comments) shows how severe this change is and we cannot find any planning permission for this wall.

We have measured it at 1.4m in height which exceeds the 1m height restriction before planning is needed, due to the fact that it borders the highway. We would be interested to understand if this wall does meet planning requirements and if not, what action you might be taking to rectify this safety issue?

If there is an increase in the number of vehicles passing Sandy Lane and many of these proposed vehicles are large, heavy trucks, the potential for harm is increased tenfold. Many of our visitors have children in their vehicles, when trying to exit Sandy Lane, and yet their safety has been completely disregarded by the applicants already.

With this in mind, how are we, as residents, supposed to believe that the applicants will prioritise the safety of the community over and above their own business interests and customers? With such a significant change of use and life endangering change at that, surely it would have been a show of good intentions if the applicants had discussed the proposal with local residents before submitting it. Again, it indicates that their intentions are purely selfish and they have no regard for their neighbours, many of which have been here for years and value the clean, safe and peaceful environment we live in. They have not included residents in this application process, and it was via another resident happening upon it that we are even aware of this application in time to submit this objection. We have not seen any notification of this application posted locally and had no notice sent to us directly (as owners of Rose Cottage).

These applicants have a history of disregarding the safety of road users with their desire to build high walls around their properties. We understand that they previously lived at Dusk Wood on Roughcote Lane, Caverswall on the junction with The Green. As you can see from this Google image (in emailed version), they decided to build a wall far exceeding the normal height allowed for frontages on the highway reducing the view of vehicles coming from The Green. We haven't been able to easily find the planning permission for this either. Despite having space on their drive, they would leave a larger vehicle wholly on the corner pavement, causing further obstruction for the view of people exiting The Green onto Roughcote Lane which was especially dangerous for those turning right out of The Green.

Objection 3 : Noise, disturbance and smell

The increase in noise and polluting emissions from the vehicles regularly accessing this site would be detrimental to the local area, both for the residents and wildlife (see objection 4 for wildlife specifics). The rumble of vehicles over the gravel will be noisy and dirty. As we are down the bank, from the site, we will have continuous clouds of dust over our properties, affecting our air quality and when one of us already has breathing related health conditions this would adversely affect us. The noise of reversing vehicles will more than likely have the irritating beep or warning message such as 'this vehicle is reversing', on repeat. The general noise of the engines moving and idling will be intrusive and loud even through our hedgerow protection. In addition, there will be the ongoing sounds of the materials being unloaded and the shouts of workers trying to be heard over the din. None of these sounds are conducive to the peaceful, countryside environment. Add to this the exhaust fumes from all these vehicles that will severely impact the air quality in the local area and cause regular pungent smells. This would particularly affect those of us who live closest and again, this would aggravate an existing health condition.

Objection 4 - Environmental

The increase in noise and air pollution (from dust and fumes) would be particularly detrimental to our resident Barn Owls. They nest in the cow shed, on the land of Rose Cottage and directly over the fence from the applicant's site; as shown in the screenshot from Google maps (image in emailed version).

Barn owls are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as a 'Schedule 1' species. They have recently returned to Green Status from Amber due to conservation efforts but that should not stop us from maintaining their nest here. Barn owls are loyal to their nesting sites but will abandon it if there is a change to the food supply and/ or disturbance from human derived activity, which this proposed business would absolutely cause on both counts.

We also have an abundance of other wildlife such as the usual, rabbits, pheasants, moles, many small bird varieties, squirrels, corvids, foxes, badgers, buzzards and more recently we have seen red kites visiting. Clearly, we have abundance of small animals as the food source for our barn owls. Video footage of the owls is available as a local enthusiast set up cameras to catch footage of them in 2024 (video attached to emailed version). We now have updated images of these owls using this location still (08 Nov. 25).

Objection 5 : Design, appearance and impact on the character of the area

Acres Green is referenced in the application. This business is more in keeping with the rural setting as they sustainably produce from the land, on site as well as importing some of their similar produce. This is also the case with the recently closed nurseries they referenced. The applicant's business does not fit into the local area's appearance as the site is not a former quarry (as with Stone Valley) and none of their product will be sourced on site. They will be materially altering the character of the site from a green plot of land to a churned up, dirty, dusty and industrial looking area which is definitely not in keeping with the local area, especially given its visibility from the highway. The lack of greenspace they intend to leave doesn't feel enough and we suspect could be used for storage/ vehicle movement overtime and lead to an overdevelopment of the plot. Though it is questionable whether the current proposal satisfies the overdevelopment consideration?

They reference A G Services (vehicle repair) but this site is not visible from the highway and provides a service to many of the local farmers, so is in keeping with the character of the area. They reference Hardiwick Kennels, which is visible from the highway but is designed to be as low impact as possible. Their customers both dogs and owners alike are synonymous with the countryside and thus the character of the area.

Caverswall Creamery is another referenced local business. Again, this business produces local farm produce on site, which is very much in keeping with the local area's character and design. They have successfully managed an increase in small vehicle traffic, as a result of their on-site activities, and has become a locally supported visitor attraction. Helping that farm to diversify and keep trading in this ever more difficult farming landscape, whilst maintaining the character of the area.

They also reference Foxfield Railway which is a relic of the olden days of travel and is now a well-loved visitor attraction. It generally only runs on Sundays on a limited number of runs, so any noise pollution is negligible, and it is a quaint steam engine, in keeping with the local area's history.

As Caverswall borders the Stoke on Trent City boundary it is already facing encroachment from the massive housing developments on the fields between it and Meir. The lovely, rural village feel and character of Caverswall is being eroded already, and it is up to Staffs Moorlands planning team to preserve the rural feel of the village in spite of this. To allow this application to proceed would be leaving Caverswall to battle on 2 fronts for its identity of a safe, small, rural village.

Objection 6 ¿ Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

According to your own interactive map on the Staffs Moorlands website, this area falls into the Full Greenbelt area and subject to policies SS2 and SS10.

Policy SS2 has a fundamental aim to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land open. Based on the urban sprawl that Stoke on Trent City Council is allowing to the south of Caverswall, it would seem more important than ever to counteract this and refuse this application due to its very urban/ industrial implications.

Policy SS10 states that there will be strict control over inappropriate development in the green belt and that approval should only be given in ¿very special circumstances¿ that clearly outweigh the potential harm to the green belt. We fail to see how this application would fit any special circumstance and how the damage they will inflict on the green belt will be outweighed by anything. Whilst rural diversification is a consideration in such circumstances, we have evidenced the fact that this business would not add to diversification and is not needed in this location due to the abundance of other local businesses providing this produce.

Objection 7 ¿ Loss of privacy/ overlooking

The size of many of the vehicles they propose will be entering the site means there will be many more people with an overview of nearby properties, particularly the 3 to 4 direct neighbours. Taller vehicles may well be high enough to see over the hedges and remove the privacy they currently have.

Additional notes and thoughts

Given the saturation of similar businesses in the wider area (Stone Valley, Caverswall Common; Milton Garden Products in Blythe Bridge; Paving UK, Blythe Bridge; B&Q, Meir Park) it is hard to understand the viability of this proposed business. We are unsure how they propose to classify the 3 staff members as ¿local¿? Aside from that, we think it is a gross over estimation of the required staff for the numbers of customers they are proposing as well. Either they are under-estimating the number of customers in order to get this application passed, or they are being genuine and setting up this business to fail. This would then leave a lot of land which has had a change of use and allows it to more easily be built on?

How can the business be profitable with deliveries only in bags? For example, the likes of Stone Valley have deliveries of Indian Stone in large containers on articulated lorries.

As previously stated, the applicants recently lived at Dusk Wood, Roughcote Lane, Caverswall. They purchased the house in a poor condition and took some years to do it up before selling it for a profit. They have moved into Higherland Farm which also needed renovations, and it stands to reason that they may move on again once it is all complete. If this application passes, we have to wonder whether it is a convenient way to change the use of the land to make it easier for further development in the near future; significantly increasing the profit they would make when selling the land and property. If they genuinely wanted to live in the area for the long term and establish a long lasting, profitable business, they would have fully engaged the residents/ community before submitting any plans. Actions speak louder than words and the applicants' actions show a clear disregard for others and the environment over profit and gain for themselves.

We look forward to hearing that the only sensible decision to be made on this application is a refusal. As it feels like any attempt, by the applicants, to enter a discourse with the local residents about suitable adjustments would be disingenuous and would soon be ignored once the business was running. We strongly feel there is no suitable way to mitigate the harm to the local wildlife and the issues around the highway infrastructure and safety concerns.

Thank you for your consideration of these objections, we would be happy to discuss these further if necessary.

Kind regards,

Mr & Mrs Powell

Additional thoughts - there are a number of supporters on this application who do not live close enough to be impacted by the increase in noise, environmental and traffic issues. It would be interesting to hear their thoughts if they actually had to live next to such a site.

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