

Planning Department
SMDC

East Lodge
Farley Road
Oakamoor
Staffordshire
ST10 3BD

Reference: SMD/2025/0363
6 November 2025

Comment

Following 35 years of aggressive and disappointing misuse of Moorcourt and in particular Moorcourt Hall, I am pleased that this application has the semblance of a well structured proposal to strengthen some weaknesses not only in appearance but also security.

I will draw on parts of the applicants design statement which I find heartening and include the reference to use the property as a private dwelling, after all Moorcourt and the Estate as a whole was sold as a 'private residential estate'. Also, if my assumptions and conclusions are correct, there appears to be a desire to respect and to conform with the subsisting restrictive covenants which apply unilaterally across the estate.

Having said that I think it is fitting to congratulate the applicant for saying that he intends to use matching stone and traditional wrought iron work. It would be a pleasing achievement to incorporate the original design of the now missing gates from East Lodge and South Lodge entrances, therefore no design differences to raise argument, other than scale.

I do have some reservations with the application mainly relating to scale. If we take the 3rd entrance point along the southern driveway first. This is generally of a most fitting design concept however its proposed proportions leave me a little staggered, as they would be more breathtaking than the main entrance further South. The increase in height from just over 3 feet to a whopping 13 feet is quite disproportionate.

I now turn to the entry point 4 closest to the Coach House. Again the principal of an enhanced appearance by rebuilding/repairing the gate pillars and increasing the height and a more attractive wrought iron design would look most appealing, however an increase in height may have an adverse effect on the Coach House, by raising the height from about 4 feet to nearly 10 feet may be considered excessive.

The other 2 entry points are of more modest proportions and are more likely to give additional security for the occupants of the Hall as well as improvement.

The overall proposal in its current form is bringing about a separation of the Hall from the greater Estate, or Park as I am told it was referred to originally. It needs to be stressed that if there is to be a revival at Moorcourt of its Heritage it must include all 58 acres and in particular a desire to include all listed buildings, after all they were listed for a purpose and are of equal status.

It is at this point I must highlight the plight of the Eastern driveway and the appalling state of damage it is in. This damage comes from large and heavy vehicle traffic generated by the wrongful commercial use of properties, breaching restrictive and other covenants daily. I am hopeful that following 35 years of misuse and neglect by the previous owners of Moorcourt Hall and to a lesser extent the commercial use by others today that the new owner will buck this trend.

My comments in this letter reflect my prolonged aim to protect and preserve a forgotten area of Staffordshire and to remember the importance of its heritage, a heritage which will never be repeated.

At this point I would like to highlight a very important situation regarding the safety of residents on the estate. On 31st October this year a serious incident occurred which required attention from the Fire Service. A small fire had suddenly taken hold of a vehicle as a result of an electrical fault, the car in question was completely destroyed under the bonnet the intense heat melted plastics 3 feet from the vehicle. The quick action of the Fire Service saved the situation from spreading to the house near to the burning vehicle. All praise to the Brigade. The driver of the appliance knew Moorcourt from previous visits. He was also aware that the agreed quickest access was via the South Lodge entrance, luckily all the gates on the west side of the estate were open and afforded instant access to East Lodge where the incident had occurred. This situation has highlighted the necessity to ensure that access across the entire estate can be made through the South Lodge entrance at all times and that all gates can be opened instantly. This will save valuable time which could save lives and property should other residents on the estate require fire or ambulance assistance.

All in all I am pleased to say that in general terms I support this application and would respectfully encourage the applicant and SMDC planning department to take on board my observations/suggestions, as today's mistake could become tomorrow's folly.

Sincerely

M I McNicholas