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Sent: 20 July 2026 11:30
To: Planning Comments (SMDC)
Subject: Comment Received from Public Access

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Application Reference No. : SMD/2026/0165 Site Address: LAND TO THE SOUTH OF Mill Lane Wetley Rocks
Staffordshire Comments by: Barrington Machin

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Submission: Objection

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20th July 2026

For the Attention of the Case Officer

Planning Applications Department

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

Moorlands House, Stockwell Street

Leek, Staffordshire

ST13 6HQ

OBJECTION LETTER

Planning Application Reference: SMD/2026/0165

Proposed Development: Erection of 4 dwellings

Location: Land South of Mill Lane, Wetley Rocks, Staffordshire Moorlands

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to register my formal objection to the above planning application for the construction of 4 houses on land off Mill Lane, Wetley Rocks. As a local resident, I strongly urge the planning committee to refuse this application. The proposal represents inappropriate development on greenfield land within the North Staffordshire Green Belt, sits entirely outside the established village development boundary, and directly conflicts with both national and local planning policies.

My objection is based on the following material planning considerations:

1. Inappropriate Development in the Green Belt (NPPF Chapter 13)

Under Chapter 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the construction of new residential dwellings in the Green Belt is defined as inappropriate development. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in "Very Special Circumstances," indeed I was refused planning for a single property opposite the proposed site even though it was on residential land and on the village side of an existing row. It is interesting to note that this had no objections from residents or statutory bodies.

The applicant has failed to demonstrate any exceptional or very special circumstances that would outweigh the permanent harm caused to the Green Belt. General housing demand or the desire to develop open market housing does not meet this exceptionally high policy threshold.

2. Severe Harm to Spatial and Visual Openness

Mill Lane has the impression of an open rural lane with far reaching views, housing development is almost exclusively single sided this development would create double sided housing development just at the point at which Mill Lane dips to a very dangerous bend and narrow bridge and becomes open countryside.

The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to keep land permanently open. The application site consists of an open, greenfield agricultural parcel. Introducing four substantial suburban dwellings, along with associated hardstanding, boundary walls, vehicles, and domestic paraphernalia, will permanently destroy both the spatial and visual openness of this rural landscape. It represents a clear encroachment into the open countryside, directly conflicting with one of the five core purposes of the Green Belt.

3. Direct Conflict with the Staffordshire Moorlands Adopted Local Plan

The application site lies entirely outside the defined settlement boundary for Wetley Rocks and is therefore classified as "Other Rural Areas" under the council's Adopted Local Plan. The proposal directly breaches several key local policies:

¿ Policy SS10 (Other Rural Areas Strategy): This policy dictates that the countryside will be protected for its own sake. It restricts development to specific rural needs, none of which apply to this open-market housing scheme.

¿ Policy H1 (New Housing Development): For smaller rural settlements like Wetley Rocks, housing is strictly restricted to limited infill within the defined boundary, or affordable housing to meet a proven local need. This site fails both criteria; it is not an infill plot, and it does not offer affordable housing for local needs. My, previously mentioned, application was not considered in fill despite being residential land on the village side.

4. Unsustainable Location and High Car Dependency

Wetley Rocks is a smaller settlement with highly limited local amenities, services, and public transport links. By building outside the village boundary, future occupiers will be entirely dependent on private motor vehicles for everyday commutes to larger employment and retail hubs like Leek, Cheadle, or Stoke-on-Trent. This directly

undermines the council's strategic commitment to sustainable development, carbon reduction, and reducing private vehicle dependency.

5. Highway Safety and Access Issues on Mill Lane

Mill Lane is a narrow, semi-rural lane that already experiences traffic pressures, particularly from nearby residential parking and traffic associated with St. John's Primary School. Creating multiple new domestic access points and vehicular turnings on this section of the lane will introduce unacceptable highway safety hazards. It will compromise safety for motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians using the local footpaths on an already constrained route at the approach to a tight bend and narrow bridge.

6. Detrimental Impact on Heritage and Landscape Character

The eastern end of Mill Lane forms part of the historic rural setting for the Grade II Listed St. John's Church and its burial grounds. The insertion of a modern, suburban residential cluster into this open field will permanently degrade the rural buffer that preserves the historic setting, peace, and character of this protected heritage asset. Furthermore, it creates a harsh, artificial urban extension rather than respecting the historic, soft linear boundary of the village.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above, the proposal represents an unjustified, unsustainable, and harmful encroachment into the Green Belt that violates both national planning policy and the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan. I respectfully request that Staffordshire Moorlands District Council refuses planning permission for this application.

I believe approval of this application would set a dangerous precedent for future applications as in the final analysis it is an agricultural field within the green belt.

Please keep me informed of any updates, committee dates, or decisions regarding this application.

Yours faithfully,

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