

Application Ref: 2020/2600/FUL

Cookswood Quarry, Bector Lane, Stoke St Michael

Stoke St Michael Parish Council – updated comments

Following the publication of revised documents, further consideration was given to this application at a meeting on 18th March 2021.

The Parish Council confirmed its objection to the application with the following clarification:

- The Design and Access statement doesn't adequately address the purpose and use of the site when taken in the context of the adjacent Cookswood holiday retreat.
- Consideration needs to be given to the significant change in the nature and character of the holiday retreat from that which was originally proposed as providing employment opportunities and leisure facilities that would be open to the local community -

Permission was granted for the holiday retreat in 2014 (ref 067818/010). The application proposed 143 timber lodges to be used only as holiday accommodation. Drawings submitted at the time for the design of the chalets indicated cedar clad single storey structures. The rationale for approval included the statement that "the proposal would be visually relatively unobtrusive and in keeping with its surroundings".

Subsequently application 2016/0102/APP included approval of details for reserved condition 2 (chalet details) which were now to be more imposing two and three storey structures with a mixture of timber clad and rendered finishes.

Application 2018/0807/NMA varied condition 5 (occupation for holiday purposes only) to enable occupation by the same persons for more than 28 days in any calendar year.

The properties are now advertised as luxury homes in an idyllic private estate

Considerable landfill has taken place particularly in the south-eastern corner of the site that was not evident in the original plans, appearing to extend the development area into the adjacent farmland.

The extensive work undertaken to date is clearly visible from the surrounding countryside and in no way can be described as unobtrusive.

- The statement that the primary function for the new tracks is to provide ease of access to fields that remain as arable farmland is difficult to comprehend. It is not clear from the proposed site plan to what fields this refers nor to why existing access is inadequate.
- There is a lack of clarity on general access to the land. The paragraph on "Use" states that the tracks will be used privately by visitors from the holiday retreat whilst the paragraph on "Appearance" makes reference to making it more accessible to others. There is no reference to access from the public footpath that runs within the south-western perimeter of the site, nor any indication of how the claimed increased access to neighbouring villages, shops and pubs would be achieved from this otherwise closed site.
- The overall impression is that the primary purpose of this application is to enable an extension of the holiday retreat onto existing agricultural land resulting in an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the area.