Address: 122 Hall Bower Lane Huddersfield HD4 6RN

About the application

Application number: 2024/93494	
What is the application for?:	Erection of restaurant/café/bar, six guest rooms, exhibition/interpretation room
Address of the site or building:	Victoria Tower, Castle Hill, Lumb Lane, Almondbury, Huddersfield, HD4 6TA
Postcode:	

User comments

Type of comment: An objection	
Do you wish your comments to be published on the website anonymously?	No

Castle Hill benefits from the protection of Historic England – Entry Number 1009846. This is for a good reason.

To begin with the access to the site, it must be accepted that the 'road' up to the top of Castle Hill is very narrow (partly one way only), has some bends which are challenging to negotiate in even a small car, frequently evidences difficulties with vehicles trying to pass one another, has no footpath (and is therefore dangerous for pedestrians), and is in a poor state of repair. In February 2022, Kirklees Council imposed 30 conditions on the strongly contested planning approval, one of which was: 'coaches are banned from Castle Hill on Saturdays and Sundays'. How ANY coach is supposed to get up the road to the top is unimaginable!

A further condition was that the 'venue must close by 11pm', but that 'weddings or other events are banned without written permission from the council' – surely a get-out clause for late night events, with associated noise and disturbance – as was experienced before the sadly-missed pub was demolished illegally. Also, there is the condition that 'people must book online first before going for a drink or meal at the venue, they can't just walk in' – but will the enormous restaurant really turn people away?

Staff and volunteers at the Castle Hill Management Group have been working hard, for decades, to improve and develop the natural environment of Castle Hill, conserving the landscape and planting natural growth such as bilberries, and also maintaining the footpaths on the hill. When Covid hit, Castle Hill became a sanctuary for local people who enjoyed the isolation, fresh air and wonderful views. Sadly, this led to the rabbit population largely leaving the area, though there are signs of them returning. A huge, noisy, brightly-lit venue on the Hill would end all hope of wildlife returning, and this would naturally have an negative effect on the trees and landscape.

The appearance of the new, fashionable, glass venue will, in no way, make reference to the history of the area, the Victoria Tower, or the historical background to the Hill. It will also be a huge edifice, requiring massive earth moving – entirely inappropriate on a Hill described as 'a scheduled ancient monument of national importance'.

The spectacular, panoramic views of Huddersfield and the surrounding district are indeed enormously impressive. But they are not the only element of importance about the Hill. As part of the Castle Hill Conservation Management Plan, local people were asked to explain their appreciation of Castle Hill. Their responses included: Symbol / landmark / identifies the area; Local pride, personal heritage / memories; To view the Victoria Tower; Good place to go walking; Natural beauty.

None of these responses mention food and booze.

The most popular response was that it was 'part of the area's history and heritage'. Castle Hill can only be de-valued by this application – becoming less of a 'scheduled ancient monument' and more of a money-making venture by a business.