DC Admin

From:
Sent: 21 February 2025 23:16
To: DC Admin
Subject: Planning application: 2024/62/93494/W

Planning application: 2024/62/93494/W

I have lived all my life in Huddersfield. Throughout that period, Castle Hill together with Victoria Tower, have stood out resolutely as an important reminder of our local heritage.

In the past, I have bought an occasional drink at the former Castle Hill Hotel prior to its demolition. Initially disappointed with the loss of what was a somewhat tatty venue, I have to say I have come to appreciate the hilltop is 'better off' without it.

Since then, the medieval hillfort has proudly served the people of Huddersfield as a location for quiet contemplation, a refreshing walk, somewhere to go and enjoy the relative peace and quiet and spot the wildlife in the fields and woods which surround it.

It has also been there for important gatherings marking historic moments, celebrating success, acting as a gathering point for landmark meetings and providing a large open space for concerts, pink parties and the like.

I was pleased to hear of the recent initiative, by Kirklees, for the Local Nature Reserve surrounding Castle Hill. This includes planting of new woodland, the augmentation of differing habitats and the reinstatement of wildlife migration routes in and out of the Woodsome/Farnley Valley. However, how successful will these be if this development is allowed at its centre?

I have watched on with concern, the various applications to build a large hospitality development in the centre of what is a scheduled Ancient Monument with its listed Victoria Tower.

This latest application has done nothing to allay my fears. The proposal remains:

- Inappropriate for the site – this type of development belongs in a town centre setting
- A threat to the very fabric of flat-topped hillfort
- A significant health and safety risk for users of the access road up to the top of the hill
- An unjustified 'repurposing' of land, bought by Huddersfield BC (from the Ramsden Family) for the future benefit and enjoyment of the people of Huddersfield
- A threat to the rural nature of the site (including its surrounding hinterland) from the additional traffic 'attempting' to get to the top and ending up abandoning vehicles on verges, laybys and anywhere else available (glad I don't live nearby)!

- Impractical from the point of view of public transport

I am heartened by the latest round of consultees comments on the application. Many have pointed out issues not previously drawn out over the 30 years this matter has cast the shadow of uncertainty over Castle Hill:

Yes – The Victorian Society see the inappropriate nature of the proposal.

Yes – As the flood authority point out, Castle Hill is a mixture of impervious rock clay and shale, so it will not meet the requirements of a soakaway for surface drainage. This is something everyone who walks the hill has appreciated from the start. Rain washes out and down the hillside in substantial quantities. The installation of an underground attenuation tank will increase substantially the level of harm caused to the Scheduled monument and any related archaeology.

Yes – the proposed lighting and surveillance cameras are wholly inappropriate (as the police recognise) but these would be necessary to protect this form of development (and its customers) in such a remote location.

Yes – Tolson Museum do have an impressive archive on Castle Hill and its history. In this day and age this needs to be digitised and offered as a visitor experience via a geo-located App – rather than build a multimillion pound development for people to queue around looking at static displays in an underground bunker.

Yes – Thanks to the Highways team a new 'feature' rears its head. Some form of 'underpass' (not referred to in the application) is planned which will add further damage to the site, it's vistas and the openness of the Green Belt. However, why no comment on the wholly unsuitable access. Digging into the scheduled hillside simply to create very tight passing points. There is no where to pass at the junction with Lumb Lane causing potential mayhem.

Yes – The construction noise (and subsequent deliveries and customers) will create noise which will travel some distance from the highest point in the area!

What about the fire service? How will people get off the hillside in the event of a major fire? Will they block the fire engines trying to get up to the fire (loaded with water - there will be little water pressure at the top of the highest point around)!

In summary, this development has been a refusal from the start. Whenever issues are identified, the level of harm intensifies. Even now there will be issues hiding in plain sight. The problem will be if they prove to be insoluble but only when construction is partway complete. What happens then? Abandon the site leaving all the harm without any of the benefits? Full reinstatement – who will pay? Or will some eyesore of a solution be tolerated just to get the job done?

This application needs to be stopped dead in its tracks as soon as possible.