DC Admin

From:
Sent: 30 July 2025 22:38
To: DC Admin
Subject: Objection to application 2024/93494

To whom it may concern,

The 3rd of July 2025 delivered a timely reminder of one of the key risks associated with the introduction of a significant commercial development at the top of a hill with sub-standard access:

Wildfires on Castle Hill are not a totally unknown occurrence. In the recent event, land adjacent to the access road rapidly caught fire, flames probably exceeded 15/20 ft high, smoke levels were extremely high and visibility very low alongside the hill. The crackling from burning gorse was loud and could easily create panic.

In this situation customers of the development could walk off the hill in the opposite direction to the oncoming fire (assuming they are sure footed, so excluding elderly, infirm or disabled customers). However, there will be no-one at the proposed development with authority to prevent customers attempting to leave the hill in their vehicles. This could mean some trying even where it would involve heading towards the fire!

Drivers attempting to drive their vehicles off the hill, risk:

- driving into pedestrians using the road to walk off the hill
- driving into a car in front in their hurry/due to poor visibility;
- simply driving over the edge due to poor visibility;
- finding they can't get off the hill and attempting to reverse, again in panic and poor visibility, potentially driving off the road or into a vehicle/pedestrian behind.
- abandoning their vehicle (parked on the road in the fire) and walk away. At best this would prevent the fire brigade from gaining access to the hill to fight the fire on all fronts, at worst, it could literally add fuel to the flames!

Approval of a large development at the top of Castle Hill would attract significant additional visitors (with cars) to park at the top – that is the clear objective.

Many comments highlight risks and reasons why the development should not be approved. Personally, one that introduces a risk to life seems to be a knock-out health and safety risk. Other issues, but nevertheless serious, arise.

Each year there are a number of events where vehicles have become stranded off the track or where they have 'gone off the edge'. One such event occurred in the last few weeks with the vehicle dropping off the track onto the road below.

The proposal is to widen the track (at certain points) to accommodate large vehicles passing, the widths seem reasonable for two cars. However, the concept of two commercial vehicles meeting (one might even be the articulated one illustrated on the plans) clearly introduces the risk of one driving off the track (and potentially dropping onto the road below).

The track to the top is not only used for vehicles. Pedestrians, cyclists even horse riders travel along this access. Afterall, the track is a through route (not just to get to the top) and increased traffic risks injury to horse riders, pedestrians, dog owners (and their animals) and off road bikers.

The access to the top of Castle Hill is unsuitable for the proposed development and cannot be widened sufficiently.

This application should be refused on multiple health and safety grounds.