

Address:

Date:

Application number: 25/01596/FUL

Proposal: Application for the use of land for the stationing of caravans for residential purposes, and dayroom and hardstanding ancillary to that use.

Location: Land East Of Chestnut Cottage Accessed From Bushmead Road Staploe

Response: Object

I would like to object to this application.

History:

The site in question was purchased and then occupied by the Rooney family in 2007 without planning permission. All planning applications were refused by the Borough Council.

The owners appealed under Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/A/11/2149691 and in 2011 the Planning Inspector dismissed the appeal as it related to the 2 transit pitches and the day room. The appeal was allowed insofar as temporary, personal, planning permission was granted for the use of land for the stationing of caravans for the residential purposes for 2 gypsy pitches together with formation of hard standing and I grant permanent planning permission for the formation of new vehicular access and the erection of stables for the applicant's horses on land north of Bushmead Road, known as St Joseph's Farm ... subject to 14 conditions." One of the conditions was that the permission was for three years and the stable was not to be used for residential purposes.

When that expired in 2014 the Rooneys applied for permanent permission 14/03009/S73 but this was refused and in 2015 the Borough Council cleared all the fly tipping, the hard standing, and the septic tank. The entrance has remained in place as it was granted permission in connection with the stable (which was never built).

The Council received a planning application 16/03661/FUL on 19th December 2016 to bring mobile homes onto the site and live in them again. The Borough Council returned the planning application and advised the agent on 12th January 2017 that it would not be considered because it would constitute a breach of the pre-existing enforcement notice.

On Monday 3rd April 2017 Bedford County Court issued an indefinite Injunction in relation to the St Joseph's site. It forbids the Rooney family and persons unknown from taking up residential occupation of the site and also forbids them from causing or allowing any caravans, mobile homes or other forms of residential accommodation to be stationed on the land. In addition the court ordered that there should be liberty to apply to vary the injunction and should planning permission be granted for residential use the injunction would cease to apply.

Of relevance is the recent planning inspectors dismissal of the appeals at Keysoe for a similar application. The decision was made in April 2025. Appeal A Ref: APP/K0235/C/22/3303840 Appeal B Ref: APP/K0235/C/22/3303839 Land known as Land South West of The Manor, Pertenhall Road, Keysoe, Bedfordshire MK44 2HR. The appeal was dismissed largely on the grounds of potential harm to biodiversity (greater crested newts, badgers and bats), its minor adverse effect on landscape character in the countryside, the effect on the amenity from nearby roads and rights of way, its creation of an urbanising effect on the rural nature of the local area, and lack of access to facilities and services. Of particular note is the argument that Paragraph 26 of the PPTS states that local planning authorities should very strictly limit new traveller site development in open countryside that is away from existing settlements or outside areas allocated in the development plan. Upper Staploe is even less accessible with even fewer facilities than Keysoe and Brook End.

Grounds for our objection to this application:

1. This site is an isolated site in open countryside. There are no facilities and it is only accessible by private car. There is no public transport, no pavement and the only route to a shop, school, or doctor is 2.4km along Bushmead Road which is a fast, busy road at 60mph with no pavements and narrow, uneven verges with overhanging vegetation often forcing you to walk in the road. Similarly, it is not a safe route for cycling. This is not a sustainable location.
2. I object to the statement that this is previously developed land. The stable block was never built and the permission granted has now lapsed. The site was left in a very poor condition in 2011 with burned out caravans on it which

the Borough Council had to clear and considerable public funds were used to return the land to its previous state.

3. I also object to the statement that the previous use of 2 gypsy and traveller pitches was acceptable to the planning inspector in 2011 in terms of character. This was a temporary use to enable the occupants to find alternative accommodation. The planning inspector stated “I agree with the conclusions of the previous Inspector who considered that the development appears unduly stark and that it unacceptably harms the character and appearance of the countryside.”
4. On p4 of the preliminary ecological assessment it repeatedly describes the site as an urban location with surrounding physical barriers. The location is anything but urban. It is an isolated field in the open countryside. The “surrounding physical barriers” are barbed wire fences around most of the site and a wooden fence near the road. They are not significant physical barriers for most animals.
5. The development could potentially cause harm to biodiversity on the site. Since the Borough Council took direct action to return the land to an agricultural field the field has been used periodically for grazing horses. Large parts of the land were overgrown with scrub and residents walking the footpath have seen badgers, roe deer, muntjac, many birds, bats and other wildlife on the site in the extensive scrub. There is a pond to the west of the site and many ponds in our parish show evidence of great crested newts. Otters have been seen just north of the site in 2024 in the grounds of Silver Birches. There is also a confirmed set just behind the mirror at the junction with Gypsy Lane and Bushmead Road. This is very close to the site in question.
6. The proposed development will urbanise the site which was an agricultural field with a diverse rural hedgerow before the site was occupied in 2007. It now has a large layby and fences by the road which are not in keeping with the rural location. The proposed development will reduce the amenity for those walking Footpath 21. It is incorrect to say that the site can’t be seen from the footpath as stated in the planning statement – it definitely can.

It will also be seen by those driving along the Bushmead Road and it will give an urbanising appearance out of keeping with the open countryside views along this road.

7. The planning inspector foresaw potential planning creep and in the 6 December 2011 decision allowed stables but point 53 says “I have restricted the use of the stables to prevent any domestic use of the building.” Therefore, permission to build stables did not imply permission for domestic use.
8. A recent planning application in open countryside in Duloe (25/00525/PIP) was refused and all of the reasons given apply to this application.
9. Similarly, an application for change of use to site a mobile home in the grounds of St Dunstons Farm (also located in Upper Staploe) on application 20/02106/COU was rejected for similar reasons which also apply here.

It is open countryside, it does not accord with the spatial strategy, it would be reliant on the private car, it would not contribute to the creation of a safe, accessible and healthy community and would not allow occupants to make a meaningful contribution to supporting the very limited services and facilities in nearby settlements.

10. We are aware that the planning inspector granted permission for an access to the highway on Bushmead Road for the stables that were granted permission. However, highways access for a stable is likely to be used relatively infrequently compared to residential use. Bushmead Road has become much busier since 2011 and there have been many accidents in recent months. Due to the roadworks on the Black Cat roundabout there are times when a lot of the A1 traffic uses the Bushmead Road and it is extremely busy. This situation is likely to continue for several years with the works on the Black Cat / A428 and then the East West Rail. We do not believe that the access is safe for regular residential use.
11. There have been around 10 applications / appeals to develop this as a gypsy / traveller site over an 18 year period and all have been refused except one temporary permission which expired in 2014 and another permission for a stable block that was never built and has now lapsed. The planning inspector has twice dismissed appeals for caravans to be sited permanently on this site. An indefinite injunction was served on this site regarding the siting of caravans in 2017 and we believe this should stand for the reasons given above. Nothing has changed. The application should be rejected. Repeated applications waste valuable time for the planning department and Parish Council and cause unnecessary stress and uncertainty for local residents.

Best wishes,