

Dear Mr Howell,

I am writing to oppose the proposed development of woodland adjoining Woodside Hamlets. The proposition is an exciting one, but having considered the application, the location appears wholly unsuitable for a development of this nature. My concerns are as follows:

1. There is no public access to the site. The proposed access via Ham Manor Park is across privately owned land (not owned by developer) and the previously suggested Mill Lay Lane access point is not a right of way, but through a broken boundary wall.
2. Ham Manor Park is a quiet residential area for retired people. Most of the residents are elderly, many are infirm, and the park has no footpaths and only one winding lane with poor visibility. The existing traffic to the Acorn campsite and heavy plant traffic associated with Rosedew farm already pose a danger to residents, and any further development would only worsen the problem.
3. The development would necessitate lighting for safety, which would cause a negative visual impact and disturbance for neighbouring residents. We are also concerned about noise and rowdy or drunken behaviour from campers in an un-marshalled campsite. Furthermore, the development poses a very real threat of trespass as people in the woods will seek the shortest route into town - through the gardens of elderly residents. There have already been incidents of trespass via the woods since the boundary was broken, causing fear and distress to vulnerable, elderly residents.
4. Adding further accommodation to the wood threatens to change the nature of the area from a peaceful rural countryside adjoining a quiet residential area, to something like a holiday park, and opens the way for even less sympathetic development.
5. This development would impact a remnant of ancient woodland and river that is of county level importance, as well as a refuge for rare and declining species of birds, protected species such as bats, badgers and otters. Owls and birds prey inhabit the woodland. The proposed site of the parking would disturb an existing badger sett. Having a human presence in the woodland, with associated noise, smoke, litter and smells, would have a negative impact on the wildlife that depends on the wood.
6. These tents are heated with a woodburning stove. In addition to the fire risk, this will encourage tree damage for firewood and cause more wildlife disturbance and stress from the smoke.
7. Increased foot traffic would cause compaction of tree roots and hasten the death of trees which, according to the arboriculturist's report, are already stressed from previous construction work. Greater tourist traffic would also aid the spread of diseases such as Ash Dieback.
8. The site frequently floods and the ground is habitually very boggy around the river. In addition to making disabled access near impossible, the risk of more frequent extreme flood events posed by our changing climate make this site unsuitable for accommodation.
9. The small nature of the woodland, together with the fact it is surrounded by residential homes and bordered by a well-travelled road, make it unappealing to people who typically rent tree tents for seclusion. Currently, no other site in the United Kingdom has more than one of these treehouses. They are all in far more remote and secluded settings. None are on the edge of a town, or in areas where they could be a tempting target for vandals.

In short, this development would be well suited to an established forestry or on a much smaller scale (one or two tents) as part of a large, established rural campsite. The Vale already has a glut of tourist accommodation for camping and 'glamping' and trying to place this development practically in the grounds of a retirement village is inappropriate both for the site and for the existing inhabitants. I hope you can persuade the developer to see the error of his ways and find a better location for this project.

Yours sincerely,

Kristi Herbert writing on behalf of Marie Dowdall

