

The Planning Inspectorate

COMMENTS ON CASE (Online Version)

Please note that comments about this case need to be made within the timetable. This can be found in the notification letter sent by the local planning authority or the start date letter. Comments submitted after the deadline may be considered invalid and returned to sender.

Appeal Reference: APP/P2935/W/20/3244389

DETAILS OF THE CASE

Appeal Reference

Appeal By

Site Address

SENDER DETAILS

Name

Address

Company/Group/Organisation Name

ABOUT YOUR COMMENTS

In what capacity do you wish to make representations on this case?

- Appellant
- Agent
- Interested Party / Person
- Land Owner
- Rule 6 (6)

What kind of representation are you making?

- Final Comments
- Proof of Evidence
- Statement

- Statement of Common Ground
- Interested Party/Person Correspondence
- Other

YOUR COMMENTS ON THE CASE

I have been saddened to learn that Lord Devonport, the 3rd Viscount Devonport, is appealing the refusal of consent for his proposed erection of a 55 metre tall artwork atop Cold Law Hill. The surrounding area, which includes the Wanney Crags, is a beautiful, tranquil and remote region greatly valued for its wilderness aspect by the many who visit there. The proposed artwork, Ascendant, by Mr Simon Hitchens, would most certainly be detrimental to that tranquillity. Whilst I am sure that Lord Devonport would be pleased to see his visible landmark, at some considerable distance from his domicile, those climbers, walkers, cyclists, artists, poets and others who regularly visit the Wannies for recreation and inspiration would find this erection monstrous and overbearing in an otherwise perfectly rural setting. I would imagine that many may cease to visit, their enjoyment shattered by the imposition of such a domineering, rusting metal spike. At 180 feet tall, it would be impossible to ignore, and would simply intrude upon everything for which the Wannies are presently valued. The proposal suggests that Ascendant would encourage a level of tourism to the area, but I am not persuaded of this. Would this mean visitors by car, stopping for a short while, perhaps to only take a 'selfie' before driving on, in place of those who presently enjoy their outdoor activities within the landscape itself, often for the entire day? Are these casual passers-by of somehow greater value than those whose pleasure is the land itself? In my own role as a biologist, I would greatly regret the scar which would need to be riven from the landscape, in order to manufacture the 'negative void' of which the artist speaks, wherein, were it possible for his creation to be laid down, the sculpture would fold away from sight. This would actually require the excavation of many tons of material from the landscape, followed by the installation of many more tons of concrete to establish the concomitant void. A small tarmac area is also planned to allow for car parking at the site. In these times of greater awareness of the environmental impact such works would have on the land itself, the artwork and allied structural works add up to a considerable carbon footprint. Notwithstanding these legitimate concerns, is there to be an ecological audit of the site to establish that there are no rare or threatened species which could be disturbed or destroyed by the implementation of the proposed works? With a monument of such huge scale as this, one would expect such audit to have already been executed. To permit Ascendant to succeed at appeal would be to allow permanent and irrevocable damage to a site of great and wild beauty. Seen from the perspective of those who regularly enjoy this area, this would be nothing short of tragedy. Seen however from the perspective of those who live and work in the area, the view of many is that this structure will simply be an eyesore. It is the conjoining of both group's views which has brought so many to object to this proposal. Within the discussion among members of the 'Keep The Wannies Wild' (KTWW) facebook group, the predominant view is that Ascendant is merely a vanity project of Lord Devonports. This is perhaps supported by the reported view that he wishes to erect a structure that will remain for "many, many hundreds of years to come". He has also declared that he wants the artwork to be "a celebration of shared values", although it has to be said that some find this comment puzzling. The KTWW group is a public group on facebook, and anyone is able to read the comments which people post there. It is a commonplace view that, in dedicating the artwork to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, Lord Devonport is wishing to 'ride on the back' of her popularity and thus succeed in his ambition. The reasoning and argument for Ascendant are seen to be contrived by many, and, while feelings are very strong on this subject, KTWW remains far above petty insults and gossip. Members decided to challenge a local newspaper, the Hexham Courant, to put the opposing view to Lord Devonports, following the paper's extensive coverage of the artwork, artist and upcoming appeal of the Council's decision to deny planning consent. It has been noted that the Courant did indeed allow our viewpoint good coverage, and that they also ran a poll in their pages, to ask their readership whether they would agree to the installation, which they did term the 'Queen's Monument'. The outcome was 14% 'for' the artwork, with 86% against, from a response of more than 1,300 votes given. We would exhort the Planning Inspector to uphold our Council's decision and reject Lord Davenport's appeal. We believe the installation of Ascendant would be very damaging, not only to the specific site, but also to the wider area and particular iconic beauty of one of the few, true wilderness landscapes that remain in the region.