

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 APP/P2935/W/20/3244389

Appeal By DEVONPORT ESTATES

Site Address
Land at Cold Law
Kirkwhelpington
Northumberland
NE65 7DX
Grid Ref Easting: 392965
Grid Ref Northing: 585151

SENDER DETAILS

Name MISS EMMA ANDERSON

Address
8 The Cherry Trees
Otterburn
Northumberland
NE19 1LN

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 wish to object to this proposal and to the appeal lodged by the appellant which, in my opinion, is flawed in every respect and at every stage.

The founding premise that Ascendant is, in any way, connected to or recognises the life-long commitment of Her Majesty The Queen to her subjects, the nation or the Commonwealth is spurious. I cannot know what exists in the mind of the appellant. Nor can I measure the extent of his stated admiration for Her Majesty. Many claim to admire Her Majesty. Some will camp out overnight to ensure a kerb-side view of a Royal occasion. A few fill their homes with Royal memorabilia. Only one, however, wants to desecrate a beautiful wild place with a colossal, inappropriate monument in Her Majesty's honour.

A visit to the Elizabeth Landmark website, or a review of the appellants glossy publicity, reveals nothing of substance to support the premise of the proposal. Supposition, no matter how ardent, that Ascendant will become a visitor attraction to rival others, an internationally revered artwork attracting countless visitors or the goose that lays golden eggs throughout the local economy, does not stand up to scrutiny.

The appellant's paltry exercise in public consultation was a sham: thirty-four days of poorly publicised displays attracted less than fifty attendees. These, and a first-school class of nine-year-olds, were asked only to assess three freakish designs. If the appellant had conducted a proper, wide-ranging public consultation, he would soon have learned that hundreds of actual objectors detested his proposal, thought it an affront to their intelligence and, although it was to be erected on the appellant's land, that it represented the desecration of their shared landscape.

Keep the Wannies Wild, the grass roots protest group which opposes Ascendant, has experienced an exponential growth; its membership now numbers almost 2000. It has the support of the local Member of Parliament, the County Councillor for the Bellingham Ward, local organisations and business people, artists, writers, musicians, brewers, publishers, climbers, walkers, cyclists and others. All bear witness to the indubitable unpopularity of the proposal. A recent poll undertaken by the Hexham Courant showed that 86% of the 1300 respondents were against the proposal.

What surprises me is that, in the six months following Northumberland County Council's rejection of the appellant's application, nothing new, in the form of hard data, has emerged to reinforce the proposal. Certainly, the appellant and his advisers appear to have softened the focus on Her Majesty The Queen and the Commonwealth. Instead they have introduced a factitious similarity between Ascendant's design and the blades of the compound steam turbine invented by Sir Charles Parsons, a previous owner of the appellant's Northumberland estate. They also suggest a specious connection to Sir William, Lord Armstrong's ownership of the nearby Ridsdale Iron Works, and its production of the cast iron used to build the High Level Bridge in Newcastle upon Tyne.

The appellant titles himself a philanthropist. Is he someone who undertakes private initiatives for the public good, focusing on the quality of life of the recipients, or can Ascendant be seen as nothing more than a vanity project, a private initiative for the personal satisfaction of the appellant? He seems unmoved in the face of immense public opposition to Ascendant. Northumberland County Council's Strategic Planning Committee, after the most careful consideration of facts, rejected the original application by 13 votes to 3. The strength of public opinion against the appeal is demonstrated by the more than 200% growth in the membership of Keep the Wannies Wild since the appeal was announced. The appellant has only a handful of supporters amongst people of his acquaintance. Few of these have little, if any, connection with The Wannies. He can only try to encourage support through full-page adverts and glossy promotional articles in the local press (only 14% of 1300 respondents supported the proposal in the Hexham Courant poll noted above). Ascendant will never be loved by the local community or by those who seek outdoor pleasure in The Wannies. Any pretence that it honours Her Majesty the Queen will be lost by what it will come to be known: Devonport's Folly.

I ask that the Planning Inspector rejects the appeal by the appellant, upholding the carefully considered

decision of Northumberland County Councillors on 2 July 2019.