



South Downs Society

Protecting the Beauty of the Downs

Planning Officer
South Downs National Park Authority
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26th January 2016

Our Ref: EHDC/1/429

Your Ref: SDNP/15/06486/FUL

Location: Matterley, Alresford Road, Ovington, SO24 1EF

Proposal: Change of use of land from agricultural to temporary mixed agricultural and summer festivals and endurance running events use, including retention of wooden structures within woodland associated with festival use.

These are the comments of the South Downs Society on the above application. The Society has nearly 2,000 members and its focus is campaigning and fund raising for the conservation and enhancement of the landscape of the National Park and its quiet enjoyment. Our comments will reflect this focus. The Society generally supports appropriate economic activity in the national park.

The society welcomes enterprise within the national park where it supports the park's statutory purposes and appropriate business activities. There are social events within the national park similar to those being proposed at Matterley. These, however, rarely attract the numbers that the music festivals at Matterley have done. They also have less loud noise associated with them. It is, therefore, necessary to consider this application in the light of its impact on the tranquil nature of the national park and its implications for the Dark Night Skies initiative.

This proposal purports to regularise activities which have taken place on The Matterley Estate in the recent past and which the applicant seeks to secure as ongoing activities for the future.

We would like to refer you to our previous comments on the similar application SDNP/14/00302/LDE drawing attention to areas of inexactitude in the planning applications emanating from Matterley Estate. This is not to say that we are against the proposed enterprises *per se* but more that we would wish to see a framework of conditions attached to any approval, should that occur.

The proposal uses plurals "summer festivals" and "running events" and it is stated in The Design, Access and Planning Statement 1.9 that "events to date should not necessarily be viewed as templates for future events." This leaves what is actually being proposed somewhat ill-defined.

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The stress appears to be on regaining the Tough Mudder and continuing to hold the BoomTown Fair. Should this be approved then planning conditions might contain restrictions on the duration of the event/s and festival/s and the regulation of traffic, noise and light pollution incurred.

The Tough Mudder event is run at different locations in the UK. It is apparent that the effect on the landscape is great. The restoration of the conserved national park natural landscape after such events would need to be considered.

Integral to the BoomTown Fair event is the retention of 20 wooden structures which have served as retreats during the festivities. From the photographs these appear to be permanent structures erected without planning permission in the national park. There is no notification about whether trees were felled to make the spaces the substantial wooden structures occupy available. It is the retrospective nature of some of the features of this application that raises the cause for concern. It would be detrimental to the purposes of the national park if commercialisation of the landscape at the Matterley Estate were to increase in the piecemeal fashion which has occurred to date.

The Society hopes that these COMMENTS are taken into account when this planning application is considered.

Yours faithfully

Steve Ankers
Policy Officer