

Dear Sir,

We strongly object to these proposed developments for reasons highlighted below.

#### Previous consultation outcome

Clearly, in order to maintain public confidence in the planning system local voices should be heard and listened to; as these are the people that will be affected directly by any developments. The outcome of the previous public consultation was recorded by the Strategic Planning Committee (17-Nov-2020) and showed overwhelming local objection to the planning proposals. The committee report indicated that 543 representations were received in response to the council's consultation on application 2020/92331, and 183 representations received in relation to application 2020/92350. Of these 726 responses, only 4 supported the application/s or gave conditional support. This equates to just 0.55% of local residents supporting the proposals. The objections from the 722 individuals were very consistent and included impact on environment, pollution, biodiversity, noise, traffic flow etc.

The planning committee acknowledged the volume of these representations in section 10.108 of the committee report and stated that "These, and the representations made by elected representatives, are material considerations that must be given due weight when the current applications are determined."

We sincerely hope that to be the case and for the public to have any confidence in the planning process these proposals should be rejected out of hand.

However, it is worth highlighting and discussing some of the previous responses to the original application and also responses from statutory and non-statutory bodies.

#### Coal authority response

The coal authority response to these proposals is interesting.

For application 2020/92331 the Coal Mining Risk Assessment, concluded that there is currently a moderate to high risk to the proposed development from coal mining legacy and for application 2020/92350 the Coal Mining Risk Assessment showed a current high risk to the proposed development from coal mining legacy; these being related to surface instability and mine gas hazards due to the presence of both recorded and unrecorded shallow coal workings and two recorded mine entries.

However, they go on to state that they have no objections to the proposals but acknowledged that this was conditional on further investigation and where appropriate remedial actions.

Clearly there are significant risks associated with this development as there must be a high risk that remedial actions to the complicated/unknown underground workings may not resolve all the issues with the potential for catastrophe should this land be built on. Should these developments be given the go ahead and a subsequent catastrophe occurs then clearly the decisions makers will be held to account.

### Current consultation

The contents of the Strategic Planning Committee report Date: 06-Oct-2022 are noted and state "A significant volume of further information was submitted by the applicant after the council carried out its consultation in August 2020. Re-consultation is therefore considered necessary before the council makes a decision on applications 2020/92331 and 2020/92350".

As far as local people are concerned the reasons for their original objections are unlikely to have changed. However, since the original consultation we note that there a number of local changes that should add further weight to the existing objections. These are all noted by the planning committee and in their October 2022 report as shown below.

"Section 3.5 The application site's context has materially changed since 17/11/2020, in the following respects:

- Gawthorpe Water Tower was added to the statutory list by Historic England on 04/12/2020. The tower is now a Grade II listed building.
- The Huntsman Inn on Chidswell Lane (adjacent to one of the proposed site entrances) has closed. • Development has commenced at land between Owl Lane and Chidswell Lane (allocated site HS47) to the southwest where full planning permission for a development of 260 dwellings was granted on 24/06/2021 under application ref: 2019/92787.
- Initial works have commenced at the east corner of the Shaw Cross junction following the approval at appeal (on 22/03/2022) of full planning permission for a restaurant (refs: 2020/90450 and APP/Z4718/W/21/3285518).
- Development has commenced at land between High Street and Challenge Way (allocated site HS51) where full planning permission for a development of 55 dwellings was granted on 27/01/2022 under application ref: 2021/91871.
- Development has commenced at land off Soothill Lane (allocated site HS72) where Reserved Matters approval has been issued in relation to a development of 319 dwellings under application ref: 2021/91731.

- Planning permission for the erection of two dwellings within the grounds of the former Huntsman Inn was granted on 14/12/2020 under application ref: 2020/91451.”

The above shows that more than 600 new homes are now approved for building. This will clearly increase the pressure on all local services including, schools, road/public transport, environment etc. Traffic volume and congestion in the area are already being markedly affected by these new housing developments. The impact of building another 1354 homes (as per this planning application) in the locality would overwhelm an already congested road network.

Interestingly, having read the planning application and the planning committees reports, I can see no mention of the impact on local health services. Existing GP, dental services and hospitals are already stretched to the limit and clearly all local health services would be negatively impacted if these developments are approved.

### Biodiversity and loss of habitat

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is an approach to development, and/or land management, that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand and a biodiversity improvement of around 10% seems to be an emerging metric.

Throughout this application process the presence of important species such as; water voles, bats, kingfishers, yellow hammers, red kites, barn owls, skylarks have been observed in the proposed development area. Clearly the success of these species and their potential for survival are going to be adversely affected if planning is approved. The loss of habitat equals loss/degradation of species across the entire planet – so its absolute folly to suggest that this development will not impact on biodiversity and wildlife in this area and that net biodiversity can somehow be gained when great swathes of beautiful countryside are built upon.

Measurable net gains for biodiversity is highlighted in the requirements of the National planning framework (revised National Planning Policy Framework 20 July 2021) these planning proposals are in breach of this framework in several areas. Notably:-

#### Section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

174. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan).

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.

With regard to a) above – this would be totally destroyed.

With regard to b) – this would be adversely affected.

Moreover, the planning applications are not consistent with objectives of either the West Yorkshire Combined authority or the Leeds City Region Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategies whose aims are to ensure that “Everybody is within easy reach of an outstanding and well used network of green and blue infrastructure that reduces flood risks and supports health, the economy, the environment and a superb quality of life”.

#### Social impact and mental well being

One other thing that has happened since the original consultation has been the Covid 19 pandemic. The open spaces, beautiful country side and extensive public paths across this proposed development area were a huge benefit to local people during lock down and as indicated above meet the needs of Green and Blue Infrastructure strategies. The open spaces became a sanctuary for many in a time of great uncertainty of the country and the world. Whilst the direct and specific benefits to people of these open and beautiful spaces are impossible to quantify; they are certainly real. Whilst a pandemic cannot be used as a reason to “block progress and development” any reasonable/sensible/rational people must surely be able to recognize how vital such open spaces are to both nature and mankind.

#### Conclusion

These planning applications have now been going on for years and years and the stress that these proposals have had on local people should not be underestimated. For reasons highlighted by others and for issues discussed here this matter must therefore be concluded with haste and the planning application declined with immediate effect.