

16th June 2021

Kirklees Council Planning Dept

FAO: Stuart Howden

Ref: Planning Application no: 2021/91640 - erection of 2 detached dwellings, with integral garages, external works and landscaping on land adj. to 35/37 Dunford Rd, Holmfirth

Dear Mr Howden

We feel lucky to have lived close to this valley bank on Dunford rd for thirty years.

We believe this proposal will have a detrimental effect on the neighbourhood, as it is too large and unsuitable for this position. We request Kirklees Planning take our concerns into consideration .

We chose to live here near Holmfirth centre and the conservation area because of this hillside. It was (still is to some extent) really beautiful through ever season and very close to the gateway of the town.

Dunford Rd is very narrow here. We have no front garden and a narrow pavement. We are very close to the busy rd which follows the course of the Ribble which flows behind our homes down the valley into the River Holme.

This bank with mature oaks and wild flowers is part of the unique character of Holmfirth Conservation area and is the last piece of greenspace which can still be seen from the town centre. It is even more valuable today as houses are being built across the Holme Valley changing the character of our Pennine Town and adding more pressure on the infrastructure.

Many building proposals have been presented over the past thirty years. In 2000 the application decision was escalated to Government Planning Inspectorate who paid a site visit in 2004. Permission was refused. The directives, issues and grounds for refusal remain exactly the same today.

We believe there are still excellent policies in place to ensure appropriate development and which aims to protect what can never be replaced.

“proposals must have an acceptable effect on the character of the surroundings”

“seeks good quality visually attractive design which creates a sense of local identity”

“aims to ensure that new development is designed to be in keeping with surrounding development, taking into account topography of the site and incorporating existing landscape features including trees as an integral part of the proposal.”

These two huge houses proposed with garages and turning spaces will not adhere to these policies.

The large detached houses proposed are to be built into the hillside. A huge amount of disruptive excavation, the removal of tons of soil, sandstone and rock resulting in the addition of gigantic retaining walls will be necessary as the bank here is extremely high and very steep. These retaining walls are not clearly shown on the ground plans or elevations. The engineering operation required will be incredibly disruptive for a considerable time as all earth must be removed from the Dunford rd level.

These buildings are huge, not in harmony with the surrounding conservation area. They will dominate Dunford Rd overpower and dwarf the terrace houses opposite and the adjacent 19th century listed building.

There is little consideration or inclusion of sympathetic landscaping proposed to incorporate the hillside. This meadow was wooded with trees, grass pasture land with grazing sheep and goats, wild roses, flowers and mature protected trees when we first moved here in 1992.

There is no scheme in these designs to include or enhance the natural character of the Holme Valley.

The bank forms part of the Kirklees Wildlife Network it is a valuable asset and unbelievable that it was not included in the original Holmfirth Conservation Area or designated a local Greenspace as the natural environment of mature trees and wildlife is brought into the centre of the town by this river valley corridor and gives everyone who live on Dunford rd ,work or go to school in Holmfirth, visitors who walk into town and people passing through great pleasure and a sense of wellbeing, surrounded by nature . It can be clearly seen here from the road, pavement and community centre. Areas like this make a major contribution to the character of the conservation area and health

and well-being of the community. It's this combination of the views, ginnels, vernacular buildings, dry stone walls and greenspaces that make Holmfirth, special, different and worthy of preservation and conservation.

We care about the environment here and wish to preserve it as much as possible for future generations. We have seen numerous species of birds, fauna and flora on that land, foxes and even deer have been spotted, bats roost in the chimney

More recently nothing has been done to preserve this environment, the ecology or rebuild the drystone wall where access was created years ago when the stream was diverted.

Mature trees have been felled and shredded leaving the stumps, branches and debris discarded and still in evidence. The land has been repeatedly sprayed with a Glyphosate weed killer ensuring little has yet grown back, for years the beautiful grassy hillside was a mass of bare soil looking sad and depressed like a brown site, without the grass, dog roses, wild flowers or trees. The huge mature Willow tree directly behind and taller than our four storey high terrace house died last year. Could that have been from incessant use of weed killer seeping through the soil to the Ribble? The tree is brittle now and dangerous, it will have to be felled. We would hate to see the Oaks there go as the mature old Chestnuts have.

It has been wonderful to watch nature regain a hold during the pandemic. So many more varieties of birds and animals like hedgehogs have been spotted this past 12 months and even the grass has finally begun to recover. Less traffic, less pollution, less weed killer!

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Historically Holmfirth has been subject to major flooding, in the recent as well as more distant well documented dramatic past. A storm on July 30th 2002 resulted in Dunford rd becoming a river, building material was washed off the hillside. Hollowgate was badly flooded. Our houses were saved from flooding by the quick action of our neighbours.

Water constantly runs off the valley hillside here. The continually running stream opposite originally flowed down the walled culvert forming a natural border between the two fields. Where the buildings are proposed. This stream was diverted years ago it still runs continuously, even in dry Summer weather, beneath Dunford rd, under R A Berry's builder's yard and like a waterfall down into the Ribble which flows behind our homes.

Flash floods can occur. Particularly if the ground is dry.

The hillside and mature trees act as a sponge taking up rainwater, The undulating land has changed shape in the years we have lived here. Underground springs through the sandstone changing course.

Surface water run off is a serious concern. When we have had a particularly dry Summer the water table is very low but as rainfall increases water flows out of the drystone wall onto Dunford rd.

This rainwater freezes in Winter.

The old Victorian drainage and sewage system cannot cope, and has only partially been updated and improved over the years. There are combined sewer overflows, leaking pipes and permitted bypass. Many of the houses have to be tanked on this side of the road and quite a few along Dunford Rd still have streams running through the basements! We have also had many problems over the years with sewerage odours and blockages along Dunford Rd from the antiquated clay pipe sewage system. New linings had to be installed in broken sewer pipes. An extremely difficult costly and disruptive job.

Kirklees Highways objected to the application over twenty years ago on grounds that vehicles emerging onto Dunford rd A616 presented a dangerous hazard. Additional parking required and access with turning for large service vehicles and emergency services was also a reason sighted for objection.

Traffic has increased substantially since then.

Dunford Road is a narrow and old route and was never designed or constructed to take modern traffic or huge vehicles. Necessary, hard won on-street parking for everyone who lives here can add to traffic congestion. At times; particularly when the Woodhead pass is closed Dunford rd is gridlocked.

Often residents cars are damaged. Just a couple of months ago a double decker bus had to pull in to let a lorry pass it clipped our car causing substantial damage. The driver obviously didn't realise. Luckily the incident was witnessed by a pedestrian and the substantial repair fee running into four figures was paid by the bus company.

When traffic volume is lower and visibility good vehicles break the speed limit which also concerns us. There is currently no pavement along the whole of the length of Dunford rd on that side where the development is proposed, from the centre of Holmfirth to the M1. A bus shelter cut into the bank with no continuous footpath is dangerous and ill

considered. It will increase the risk of accidents for pedestrians. Knowing the road well, our homes are less than four meters from the kerb, we would not want children (or indeed anyone) to wait there with the heavy traffic, poor visibility large vehicles with difficulties in passing and dangerous erratic speeds.

The engineering operations required for a build on this scale to ensure the houses in the conservation directly above are secure will be extensive and exacerbate the current traffic situation to unacceptable levels not only for those who live and work in Holmfirth, but for everyone needing to travel this route.

Finally these proposed imposing large houses are not designed sympathetically with thought for the needs of the community, they will be expensive and are not affordable housing with young first time buyers in mind. We therefore request that this application be refused.

Yours faithfully