

Kirklees Metropolitan Council,
Planning Services,
PO Box B93,
Civic Centre 3,
Huddersfield,
HD1 2JR.

For the attention of Mr C. Carroll

12 June 2021

I DO NOT WISH MY ADDRESS OR PERSONAL DATA TO BE PUBLISHED

Dear Sirs

Re: Objection to the proposed development at 28 Northorpe Lane, Mirfield, WF14 0QN
Application Number: 2021/91914/E

I object to the above application due to the wholly unsuitable nature of the proposed development for this location.

The scheme was always unsuitable but the plans by Kirklees Council to dig up the Green outside Northorpe Hall and build a layby is beyond belief. What makes this situation even worse is to find that the Council's claim that the Green was highway 'verge' was based on nothing more than an assumption by Highways Officers. To have discreetly tried to change the original application to include this land is disgraceful and for the Planning Department to have failed to serve the correct notices demonstrates what a chaotic and disorganised state the planning process has reached in this Local Authority.

Had the Council's Officers undertaken the appropriate investigations at the outset, they would have quickly realised that the Green at Northorpe is not only private land, but it has *never* formed part of the public highway and therefore any suggestion that the Council somehow has a right to build a layby on it is wrong. Disappointingly, despite the failings of Council staff to carry out the relevant due diligence, it is completely unacceptable that the Council refuses to provide any explanation as to why it assumed this land could be used. How can the public have any confidence in the integrity of the Local Authority when it acts with such disregard for the very people it is supposed to be serving?

It is ironic to find ourselves in a situation where some years ago the Highways Department installed a high kerb along the Green with the specific purpose of preventing vehicles parking on any part of it, because of complaints from Northorpe Hall and local residents about the damage that was being done to this land by vehicles. The same department now proposes to ignore their previous actions and claim the Green for itself. As far as I am aware depriving an owner of their property is theft and is still a criminal offence and entering onto property without consent is still trespass. Either way your proposal is unlawful.

The Council has an obligation to ensure that the design & layout of its highways maintain and promote road safety. The highways problems on Northorpe Lane have been growing worse for many years and trying to create a layby is clearly not the answer. The addition of any new dwellings, let alone 45 houses will just add to the road safety problems on a lane which is already congested. The current volumes of traffic already lead to gridlock and accidents at the junctions with Northorpe Hall and at Shillbank Lane and Crossley Lane. The Highways Department seems to be deliberately underestimating the number of vehicle movements that this proposed development will generate in an orchestrated attempt to make the application appear acceptable so that it can be approved.

The number of houses will generate dozens of traffic movements per day. The developer has allocated 105 parking spaces. The Council claims that there will be only 35 cars on this site. If any meaningful assessments of planning applications is to be made, then it is a fundamental requirement that they are assessed in the real world and not based on some arbitrary, outdated method of calculations that is deliberately skewed in the developer's favour. The Council's Highways and Access Policy (LP21) requires that new development will not be detrimental to road safety for all users and will ensure the safe and efficient flow of traffic on the surrounding highway network. The road junctions at Northorpe are problematic to say the least and getting worse every year. Adding traffic from another 45 houses will be catastrophic. If the Council has a commitment to ensure that new developments do not add to existing highway problems, then it is not possible for you to approve this planning application.

The Green is integral to the position of Northorpe Hall at the centre of the village. The Hall is a Listed Building and all of its land is also Listed. Your Historic Environment Policy states that the Local Plan sets out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets and that the council recognises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should aim to conserve them. It is obvious that the Council has no intention of conserving them given that the suggestion to tear up the Green has been put forward by its own staff, who should be fully aware of the content of the Local Plan.

The Highways Team has already conceded that the access to the new site is not adequate or safe without road widening taking place. If the Council is not in a position to offer Northorpe Hall's land as a 'sweetener' to the developer, then by its own admission, the scheme is unsafe and does not meet highways standards. Therefore, the application must be refused.

The proposed houses are in no way appropriate to this village. The number is too high and the style and design is not sympathetic to the character of the local area. An estate of this size will overwhelm this community and cause untold damage to it. The Council purports to have policies to protect communities, preserve our heritage and conserve green spaces because all of the factors are beneficial to local communities. However, the truth seems to be that the Local Plan goes in the bin as soon as there is the slightest opportunity to build some more houses. It is not worth the paper it's written on.

The issue of flooding on site is being completely ignored. I have lived in the lane for almost 60 years and it is well known that the lower portion of this field gets water-logged. That is the reason why it was not used for the cultivation of crops when it was farmland – because the farmer's tractor would get stuck. The land was either left fallow or used for grazing. Once the field has been built on, the ability to soak up rain and spring water will be lost. The consequence will no doubt be that anyone who lives below the site will have to deal with the flooding that

this causes. Residents in Northorpe Court already have problems, but this will only get worse. Is the Council prepared to compensate them for these issues?

This entire process calls into question whether applications are being determined impartially or whether the need to meet the target for new homes has become the sole focus of the Council no matter what the costs to the existing residents of Kirklees. Are Council staff on some kind of bonus scheme whereby they are rewarded for forcing through as many applications as possible? Someone is reaping benefits from this system, but it most certainly is not the residents of Kirklees. The entire process is suspect and needs to be independently reviewed.

The proposed development is not acceptable and I object.

I reserve the right to submit additional evidence to object to this application.

Yours faithfully