

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

2nd January 2022

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 am writing to you to object to the proposal to build 43 houses and remove the village green at Northorpe Lane to facilitate the development of a greenfield site.

The Highways Department has already accepted that the access to this site is not safe. It says that access to the proposed development can only be gained if a road widening scheme takes place. This involves the removal of the green at Northorpe Hall. In an effort to persuade the Planning Committee that this just an insignificant piece of ground without any value to the community, the Highways Department referred to this space as a 'verge' and claims that it was part of the public highway. Unfortunately, it appears that staff in the Highways Department made an unfounded and dangerous assumption and subsequent legal investigations have shown that this land has *never* been part of the public highway. There is no evidence whatsoever to support the Council's claim.

This land is part of the curtilage of a Listed Building and is a valuable heritage asset and green space that has benefitted the well-being of the residents of Northorpe for hundreds of years. Thanks to the community spirit of Northorpe Hall Child & Family Trust, successive generations have been allowed to enjoy the use of this space as an area to play and meet. I moved to Northorpe in 1966 and along with my neighbours, our children spent countless evenings, weekends and school holidays with their friends playing happily and safely on the green. My Grandchildren have been able to do the same and I sincerely hope that many future generations will continue to do so. It has been a place for residents to meet and is in daily use by people from the immediate neighbourhood and beyond and in return, we work with the Hall to maintain and protect this space for our shared benefit.

This is such an important open space. Kirklees Council policy for open spaces tells us that it recognises that access to open spaces and opportunities for recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. You say that these urban green spaces also perform an important function by providing visual breaks in built up areas, contributing to the local character and attractiveness of towns and villages. You also tell us that the council prevents the loss of open space and gives protection to urban and local green spaces. Please can you explain how your plan to sacrifice this open space just to ensure that this planning application is approved demonstrates any genuine intention by the Council to implement its own policies?

The Green is an integral part of the siting of Northorpe Hall within the local landscape. This is a Grade 2 Listed manor house around which our village was built, and which enjoys a prominent position screened from the highway by this Green. The land is therefore classed as a heritage asset. If the Council's own policy tells us that you have a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets and that you recognise that heritage assets are "an irreplaceable resource" that should be conserved, then how can the destruction of the Green be allowed? If the Green is removed for road widening, then the Council is again ignoring its own policies, which cannot be supported.

Kirklees Council has already acknowledged that it does not own the Green and that Northorpe Hall is the legal owner. More importantly you have no legal right to take ANY of this land to create a layby, so is the Council confirming that its intention is to act unlawfully just to facilitate the profits of a builder?

The Highways Department has admitted that the site is unsafe to access without major alterations taking place – namely digging up the Green to widen the road. The Council has an obligation to ensure that highways design ensures road safety so without this land, the planning application is does not meet the required standard for highway design and is not acceptable. It must therefore be refused.

The long-established highways problems on Northorpe Lane will not be resolved by this alteration, and the addition of 43 houses (indeed *any* additional dwellings) will simply add to an already congested lane and to the gridlock and accidents at the junctions with Northorpe Hall and at Shillbank Lane and Crossley Lane. It is a serious concern that the Highways Department appear to be deliberately underestimating the number of vehicle movements from this proposed development in an effort to make the application appear to meet requirements and I am of the opinion that this is orchestrated move by the Council to create an impression that the application should be approved. This is wholly unacceptable.

The type of dwellings that are being proposed are completely inappropriate to this location. They bring no benefit to the character of appearance of the village - effectively you are just allowing a large number of entirely unsuitable boxes to be pushed into a traditional, historic and characterful neighbourhood. Your own Conservation and Design Consultancy team have criticised the scheme as being too dense and with insufficient spacing around the units. This is not 'planning' – it's just a tick box exercise to satisfy your targets. The public in Kirklees deserve better and it is little wonder that the Council gets such bad press for its planning decisions. It must be apparent that the public have no confidence in the integrity of the Council and its various departments.

Residents have a right to expect that their comments will be respectfully considered and that there will be recognition that this application will have a hugely detrimental effect on the existing community. Consequently, the application for 43 houses and the destruction of the Green at Northorpe Hall should not be approved.

Yours faithfully