

From:
Sent: 18 August 2022 22:43
To: DCAdmin
Subject: 2021/62/91914/E - Land at 28, Northorpe Lane, Northorpe, Mirfield, WF14 0QN

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Note: I do not want my personal details to be published by the Council.

Dear Sirs

I write to register my objections to this application.

The site is not viable due to the inability of the developer to create a suitable access. Despite protracted efforts to illicit information from the Council, no definitive evidence has been provided that the land owned by Northorpe Hall Child & Family Trust can be simply handed to a developer. The conduct of the Council's officers in failing to respond to reasonable requests for information is unacceptable. The fact that a Local Authority does not maintain accurate records on the highways within its Borough is astounding and to allow an application to proceed based on nothing more than an assumption is at best unprofessional, but moreover, incompetent. I would be pleased to receive unequivocal information to demonstrate that the Council's position is legally and irrefutably accurate.

In terms of the proposed housing development, there are a number of issues which the Planning Department has failed to adequately address.

The issue of road safety is a matter which has been highlighted time and again. The traffic generated by a development on this site would be enormous. The predicted number of traffic movements is a gross under-estimate. It's clearly nonsense to believe that 39 dwellings will create just a handful of vehicle movements. We are aware of the Council's reliance on outdated guidelines is a useful tool for you to assist developers, but there is a conflict between the Planning Team's approach and the views of Councillors on the Planning Committee. It is difficult to reconcile why Planning Officers stick rigidly to the outdated guidelines in some applications and not in others. Please can you explain where there is such a lack of consistency and what criteria you apply when deciding which applications should be given the benefit of the inappropriate guidelines and which will have to meet rigorous requirements.

The junction network at Shillbank, Northorpe and Crossley Lanes is congested and difficult to negotiate, particularly at peak times. The latest version of the developer's information is once again inaccurate and misleading. It cannot be relied upon and is clearly skewed to create an impression of no issue.

A previous planning application for Croft House Farm Livery Stables on Northorpe Lane imposed a condition that access to the premises had to be from Crossley Lane and not Northorpe Lane, to control the volume of traffic using Northorpe Lane as it was seen as a road safety issue. Levels of car ownership and general traffic have increased since that time, but it is clear that if traffic levels were an issue at the time of this previous application, they have certainly got worse during the intervening period. How can the Council now consider that 39 new houses will have no impact? The traffic from a development of this size will certainly outweigh the amount of traffic visiting the livery yard, but you now want to move the goal posts. Please explain how you can you reconcile this situation.

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. If the Council has a commitment to ensuring that new developments do not materially add to existing highway problems, then this development could not be approved, not least because you have cited unacceptable increases in traffic levels previously as a reason not to allow access to a site from Northorpe Lane. Could it be because there are certain benefits to be derived from this proposal that a livery yard would not yield?

The Council's highways policy (10.74) states; *"The council is committed to ensuring that new developments do not materially add to existing highway problems or undermine the safety of all users of the network."* The Council is choosing to ignore its own policies simply to ensure the developer is given approval.

In addition, Northorpe Lane is unsuitable for the volume and type of vehicles that will be required to construct the proposed dwellings. The challenging nature of the site requires extensive engineering works to be undertaken and the volume of traffic that this will generate is unreasonable for this location. This is a further road safety issue. Clearly there are serious road safety concerns arising from this proposal which have not been addressed.

The proposed design and layout of the site is inappropriate for this location. A density of 39 dwellings is far in excess of what could be considered as an acceptable addition to the village. Your own Conservation and Design Team agrees that the density and layout is not appropriate.

The design of the units is not appropriate to the location and will have an over-bearing effect on the existing, neighbouring homes. The proposed units do not reflect the character and historic nature of Northorpe village. Their style is stereotypical of modern estates up and down the country – easy for the developer to build but completely unimaginative and contributing nothing to the architectural landscape of this locality. This does not meet the Council's policy requirements for high quality design.

I note that there is no provision whatsoever for the elderly or disabled in this application. All of the proposed dwellings are two or three storeys in height and unsuitable for requiring accommodation on a single storey layout. The housing mix does not reflect that of the local neighbourhood. Kirklees Council claims that there is a lack of suitable housing provision for the retirement and disabled communities within the Borough. Here is an opportunity to make a contribution to housing provision for these groups, but presumably the Council wants to put the developer's profit before the needs of residents.

The developer's contention that there is insufficient profit in the site to enable social housing is laughable. Whilst the feasibility study looks impressive, the inaccuracies used to support this conclusion are so blatant as to render it useless.

Ground water conditions mean that the lower portion of the site in particular, is prone to flooding. Existing residents already experience problems due to the high water table. Quite clearly if the field is covered with buildings, hard landscaping and tarmac, the drainage profile of the site will change significantly, and water will be displaced elsewhere. Given that water drains in a downhill direction, the existing dwellings adjacent to the lower part of the site will have to cope with the consequences of increased ground water problems created by this development.

Under Policy LP28 there is a presumption against the pumping of sewage where sites cannot be connected directly to the main drainage network. Disappointingly, I note that the Council has chosen to waive this requirement – once again to facilitate the Developer's plans. The potential implications of the failure of pumping stations is well known. Who picks up the bill if owners can't or won't pay for its maintenance?

The Green is an integral part of the siting within the local landscape of Grade 2 listed building – Northorpe Hall. The Hall enjoys a prominent, elevated position protected from the highway by this portion of its land. The removal of ANY part of this heritage asset has a significant detrimental impact on the visual amenity of this Listed Building and the immediate neighbourhood. The Council's policy on Heritage says 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 *"should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource."* Any proposal to approve the development ignores this policy.

Your policies on open spaces also acknowledge that *‘Kirklees recognises that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Within Kirklees many open spaces, both public and private, provide opportunities for recreation to encourage physical activity and a healthy lifestyle. 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.’* it goes on to say the Council will protect opportunities that support a healthy lifestyle by preventing the loss of open space and give protection to urban green spaces and local green spaces. It is difficult to reconcile your intention to destroy a valuable and historic green space and heritage asset in direct contradiction to the Council’s own policies. This cannot be supported.

This is not an exercise in Town Planning – it appears that there is little planning involved. Instead, there is simply a push by the Planning Department to help developers secure planning consent regardless of the detrimental impact on the communities it is supposed to serve. Someone is benefitting for this unequitable process, but it is certainly not the residents of Kirklees. Little wonder that those who live in this Borough have no faith in the probity, integrity or transparency of the Council.

Yours faithfully