

HS3 Phase 1 (also described by the developers as HS3 Phase 2), now the subject of planning application 2022/91735

Introduction

I am one of the Almondbury Ward Councillors representing residents in Almondbury Ward including residents in Lepton and Fenay Bridge who are opposed to the plans to develop the fields in lepton and Fenay Bridge.

I would like to provide some background and context with my submission as follows:

Kirklees Local Plan was adopted by the Council in February 2019 despite opposition at the time.

Many residents in Lepton felt their voices were not heard and what became clear was that the process of raising objections in the Local Plan in its various stages was far from straightforward.

One of the objections raised by me at the time of the Plan's adoption related to it being based upon outdated Government guidance using 2014 ONS data on population growth which had over- estimated population growth in Kirklees according to later ONS data in 2016. Despite this the Council proceeded with the over- estimated numbers in the 2014 data and planned for 31,000 plus new houses to be built across Kirklees.

According to the latest Census 2021, I understand there are in the region of 16,000 fewer people living in Kirklees than there were in 2011. It's clear we do not therefore need all the land allocated for houses in the Local Plan where approximately 10,000 – 11,000 of those houses are planned to be built on all the green belt land that was allocated for housing in it.

In the meantime I have read reports in the national media where some green belt campaigners have raised concerns that former green belt land that has been earmarked for new houses may be built for people who will never exist as Councils look to meet Government objectives for increasing housing stock- Guardian 9th September 2019

What therefore is the real cost to residents of Kirklees with our loss of precious green belt land, -is our fragile environment, our beautiful landscapes and for many their local village life and village atmosphere.

Local Plan policies should be reviewed every 5 years especially where there is significant change. In 2019 Kirklees declared a climate emergency, this is significant. Additionally In Kirklees we have according to reports 16,000 plus fewer people living here as referred to above. This too is significant and should not be overlooked either.

In the absence of any clear guidance coming from Government, I believe this Council should act now, look to reduce the numbers of housing in its Local Plan to better reflect population numbers, and start to address climate change through a review of its Plan taking into account that new houses need to be built close to employment, amenities, shops cafes, sports facilities, recreational facilities and centres for commerce in order to reduce our carbon footprint.

I have considered the planning application made for site HS3 Phase 1 now 2022/91735 and wish to make the following comments:

- 1- The joint master plan submitted in support of this application seems to be the same as the one submitted for HS2 Phase 1 now known as 2020/92307. This does not comply with PLP 5 as required by the main modifications mm 43 and mm 46.
- A) The masterplan does not address the creation of a strong sense of place, nor describe how it will add or be beneficial to Lepton's residents or quality of place.

Additionally rather than enhancing and creating a sustainable community, the current proposals in the master plan will have a negative impact on the village of Lepton and remove its potential to be sustainable due to the loss of its valuable green fields, green space and agricultural land which will be key to how people and communities survive in the future. Additionally, building houses on what were formerly beautiful green spaces impacts on people's well-being and health, again there will therefore be a negative impact. It is my view that the Council's Health and well being strategy should have been given greater weight and consideration in the assessment of the loss of our green belt to housing in the Local Plan and I hope greater weight will be given to it in the reviewed Local Plan.

Additionally in describing its plans to create a sense of place the Master plan refers to a sequence of linked spaces which gradually step up the sloping site. It is not clear how this will be achieved though given the somewhat haphazard approach to the developments, based purely it seems on cost. There are therefore no assurances this sense of place as described will ever happen. There is no provision within the joint masterplan for a community centre or recreational activities such as tennis courts. I understand the nearest ones are at a private club on Longley Rd. Additionally a community centre would be of huge benefit to the community of Lepton and Fenay Bridge. There is no green space set aside for community allotments such spaces are needed for the future sustainability of communities and while I note a community allotment on Highgate Crescent is mentioned, I was not aware of it nor have I ever seen it. I do not see evidence of any sense of place.

I also object to the wording of how developing these fields for housing will "round off Lepton". Lepton village is just that. People chose to live here because they like the village atmosphere and life here on the edge of fantastic countryside. If they had wanted to live in a town, built up environment or city conurbation then this is what they would have chosen. Far from creating a sense of place, the developments negate a sense of place and will impact on the village of Lepton and its inhabitants.

- B) Biodiversity, the protection of Lepton Great Wood (An ancient woodland dating back to the C16th and the wildlife corridor are of immense importance

The NPPF, the Forestry Commission and NE standing advice already make provision to protect ancient woodland in England. The standing advice on buffer zones in relation to ancient woodland was increased to 50m in December 2017 and was noted during the “ping pong” stage in the passage of the Environment Act 2021 through Parliament.

What evidence is there to suggest 20m is sufficient? I have serious concerns about the aspect of such a narrow buffer zone from the point of view of the protection of the fragile eco system that exists in and around Lepton Great Wood and its flora and fauna including ancient trees. Additionally there has been an increase in recent years of wildfires. A couple of years ago we had three such fires in close succession, one on the former railway track near Fenay Bridge Rd, one at Castle Hill and one at the scout camp nearby in Lepton. There have also been major wildfire incidents on Marsden Moor.

It does not seem to me that consideration had been given to the protection of houses either from the potential of wildfires caused by climate change and this narrow buffer zone needs to be increased to 50m.

I therefore request that in the best interests of protecting Lepton Great Wood – ancient woodland, its wildlife and eco systems and protecting homes from wild fires in the future that a 50 m buffer zone be implemented.

Please explain how the ancient woodland will be protected from a huge increase of walkers and or dog walkers, and children when many pathways have been made through the woods treading on tree roots and deviating from the PROW that crosses the woods. I do not believe the impact on the woodland from all the additional people who will be living in the area has been fully assessed. Please provide a cumulative assessment of the impact from the increased population using the wood before any planning application is considered.

Additionally what measures are being taken to provide protection for Beldon Brook wildlife corridor and the habitat network. Again, I request a cumulative assessment be undertaken on the impacts on the Beldon Brook eco-wildlife corridor.

I believe the planting up of bushes in the buffer zone will detract from the view from Woodsome Hall Grade 1 listed. Further I feel any interference on the land surrounding and adjacent to Lepton Great wood will damage the fragile eco system that radiates from the Wood to the surrounding habitat network. Not only this but if a wild fire was to break out bushes in the buffer zone would only help to spread the fire.

Paragraph 175c of the NPPF clearly states

‘When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles: Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable

habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists'

How will the natural environment be conserved and enhanced?

The indicative assessments recorded a significant negative in relation to wildlife in Lepton Great Wood itself and any impact will be detrimental to the entire area. How will this be addressed?

2. Cumulative Impacts

I understand that pre-app guidance from the Council underlined any application must be supported by a Masterplan that demonstrates the potential and cumulative impact of the allocated housing developments at HS2 and HS3 as well as its deliverability. I have not seen evidence of this in relation to:

- A) I request a comprehensive report be submitted to include the projected findings of the cumulative impacts of pollution from increase in number of vehicles impacting air quality;

Rowley Lane school is located on Rowley Lane, additionally the area is residential. There will be an increase in vehicles travelling up Rowley Lane from all the houses proposed in the 3 developments HS1, HS2 Phase 1 and HS3 phase 1(2), so I request a comprehensive report on cumulative impact on air quality is submitted on pollution from vehicles on the Penistone Rd corridor in Fenay Bridge, Rowley Lane near the School and Rowley Lane at its junction with Wakefield Rd.

I also request such a report provide a detailed study and findings on the cumulative impact from vehicles using Rowley Lane/ Penistone Rd junction and Rowley Lane and Woodsome Rd in relation to numbers of vehicles in terms of congestion.

Additionally I request such a report to include findings on the impact from noise pollution from additional traffic noise travelling on our roads such as the Penistone Rd corridor and Rowley Lane, particularly during unsociable hours- as road traffic noise disturbs sleep patterns which in turn affects health in a negative way;

B) Cumulative pollution impacts from construction of the developments impacting water in Beldon Brook and Fenay Beck and potential pollution impact assessment from all the houses; both HS2 and HS3. I request a base line assessment be carried out on potential pollution in both Beldon Brook and Fenay Beck and I would like a detailed report on the measures that will be taken to avoid any pollution entering these water courses from the houses and their construction.

- C) I request a comprehensive report be submitted by an independent expert on the findings from the cumulative impacts from all the planned houses on HS2 and HS3 on surface water run off on Beldon Brook and Fenay Beck and evidence to demonstrate how water run- off will be improved. It is not enough to show how it will merely be dealt with.

Any changes and disturbances to fields and land not necessarily close to Fenay Beck will have the potential to impact run off into Beldon Brook and Fenay Beck. Additionally I am unhappy about the cumulative loss of these fields which make up HS3 and HS2 which have been used for agricultural purposes for a long time.

D) I request a cumulative impact report be submitted on the impact on Lepton Great Wood (ancient woodland) from residents, dog walkers and dogs. (referred to above) to include a report on the cumulative impact on its eco system, wildlife, habitat network and biodiversity.

E) Cumulative impact on GP practices- While I realise GP practices fall outside the remit of planning, I would like the following noting -I have raised the issue of capacity of local GP practices in Lepton and Waterloo recently with the NHS and the head of Tolson PCN. I understand that more or less all GP practices across Kirklees are all at capacity now. While it is clear from the 2021 census that there are far fewer people living in Kirklees, notwithstanding this the developers are proceeding to build houses in Lepton and Fenay Bridge which means that our local population is likely to rise. I understand each individual GP in Kirklees is now responsible for several hundred more patients than they were previously which impacts on people trying to obtain face to face appointments etc and it is a concern that people will not therefore be able to get access to a GP here once the new houses are built. I therefore request a report be filed by the PCN responsible for Lepton outlining the proposals they have to deal with an increase in patients in Lepton. We need assurances that GP practices here can accommodate all the additional residents. I would like details on what is being done now by the NHS to address this issue and details on when practices will be expanded to accommodate new patients. I realise that GP practices concerns are not a material planning consideration but nonetheless feel it is an important point and should not be overlooked.

F) In addition I note there is only one dental practice in Lepton. If we are serious about climate change then it is imperative that we can all access the services we need on our doorstep. Additionally I would like details on capacity of the dental practices detailed in the report and whether they can support an increase in the resident population.

3) Deliverability:

I would like to know how this joint plan is deliverable when there are so many unknowns and ambiguity such as there is no assurance a roundabout or the road infrastructure that is needed will ever be built? How will Hermitage Park accommodate 80 houses or even 45 with its junction with Rowley Lane so dangerous and narrow?

4) Hermitage Park

Access

I note the Council's view on the number of houses that can feasibly be built and be served by Hermitage Park is 45/50 while I note that the planning application requires 80 to be built in HS3 phase 1 (or HS3 phase 2 as it is referred to by the developers)

I sincerely hope this is not a deliberate practice.

I do not see how Hermitage Park can feasibly serve a further 45/50 houses. I suspect most of the house owners in Hermitage Park have two cars. They will also have visitors, deliveries and service vehicles using the road. Additionally many of the houses on Hermitage Park do not have big front gardens so they will be quite badly impacted by the increase in traffic noise and people all travelling past their homes. I note some of them will also be impacted at the rear too by the new houses.

It simply cannot be right to let the developers proceed with their plans which do not adhere to the main modifications mm 43 and mm 46 made by the Inspector to make the Local Plan sound. Residents of Hermitage Park require assurances. The Hermitage Park junction with Rowley Lane is just below a bend and chaos reigns at school pick up and drop off times. Additionally parents park their cars up Hermitage Park at school opening and closing times, so the Road is even busier and difficult to travel up and down. This seems to have been overlooked.

The developers should not be allowed to construct developments in this piecemeal fashion to the detriment of residents. Aren't the existing residents going to suffer enough as it is they who will bear the brunt of these so called plans. I note that the plans for HS2 Phase 1 do still not include a roundabout and the proposed entry is off Rowley Lane, just below a blind bend where traffic queues at peak times.

Geophysics

I have noted the report and I have concerns about several aspects of findings on site, such as shallow coal mining, voids, CO2 gas and arsenic. I request a further fuller and detailed report is sought that identifies all contaminants, the risk to human health and how they will be dealt with.

Fenay Beck Flood defences

I await the report from the EA on the flood risk for Fenay Beck before commenting.

3. Public Transport

Ostensibly, the developers are planning two walkable housing estate communities, but I fear they will be dominated by parking, driveways and roads.

Rather than simply encouraging people to use public transport through the provision of bus passes in order to satisfy planning criteria, I would like to know what can feasibly be done to improve public transport in the Lepton and Fenay Bridge area, otherwise mentioning public transport remains aspirational only as cuts to services are constantly made.

4. Woodsome Hall Grade 1 listed

While I note HE do not raise concerns over the potential harm to Woodsome Hall Grade 1 listed building, in terms of the view from the Hall and its design based upon the view, I believe the current proposal fails to mitigate against harm to the Hall and the view from its terrace which was designed to draw the eye up the fields to Lepton Great Wood. Planting bushes in the 20 m buffer between the development and the ancient wood land will destroy this view. Similarly so will the creation of the play areas and any swales as these need to be planted up with trees so their roots soak up the water.

5. Medieval settlement of Greave House

I request a thorough examination and evaluation of the land identified be undertaken prior to this application proceeding and that of HS2 phase 1, in order to establish whether there are archaeological remains still present as these if found form part of our local history and must be preserved.