Somerset Road,
Almondbury,
Huddersfield,
HD5 8HN

Friday, 29th July 2022

Dear Council Officers & Councillors,

I'm writing to object to Donaldson's Veterinary Hospital's application to erect a two-storey extension and alteration to the veterinary hospital on Somerset Road, Almondbury (2022/62/92097/W). I'm including councillors for Almondbury and Newsome wards. Ward maps show the site falls within Almondbury Ward, but the build affects residents within the Newsome Ward. I'm also including the Cabinet lead for Highways, since the main objection relates to the impact on highways.

The objection will focus on:

- Impact of a bigger hospital on the local area: hospital parking policy, including highway safety and traffic generation and adequacy of parking
- Noise and disturbance to residents of the existing development
- Construction
- Visual amenity

We also have some proposed improvements to the area, which we believe should be paid for by Donaldson's and enforced as part of the planning process.

Impact of a bigger hospital on the local area: hospital parking policy

I was startled to read in the applicant's Transport Statement that the assessment partly rests on the author's judgement that cars parked in the area belong to residents. The survey and its findings are dated June 2022 but I know one of the pictures was taken at least eight months before because it shows my house before changes were made in October 2021.

The hospital's carpark is underutilised and regularly sat empty whilst nearby streets become full with staff cars . The hospital has 41 car-parking spaces, 17 of which were supposed to be for staff as set out in the original application. On the 14 July 2017 Donaldson Veterinary hospital's planning application included submission of a Transport Assessment undertaken by VIA Solutions. Section 4.4.2 states:

> 'Therefore, the proposed veterinary practice requires a maximum of 24 visitor spaces, 10 vets' spaces and 9 other staff spaces giving 43 spaces in total.'

However, very few of the staff park in these spaces with the majority of them parking on nearby roads.

The photos in the latest Transport Statement (for the extension) claims to show residents' cars in the local residential area, but I have confirmed locally with other residents that they are staff

cars that often occupy the street for extended periods making it difficult for residents and visitors to park. Furthermore residents have identified that some of the cars park at junctions and block bus stops (contrary to Highway Code 238-252 https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code)

The pressures on residents' parking have been exacerbated by two factors: (1) the lack of parking controls in the area (e.g. residents' parking) and (2) Mr Paterson (director of Donaldsons) instructing staff to park off-site as confirmed in an email from him dated 6 November 2019 in which he expressed sorrow about resident problems "again" and said:

> "As you are aware, we do have staff carparking on site which can be used by some staff but there are some staff who do need to park off site. I had asked staff to park on streets where there was more in the way of off-road parking but unfortunately, they seem to be getting grief from residents wherever they park and I suspect that is what has driven them to park on Somerset Road."

The "grief" relates to parking which has been shown to be inconsiderate and causing visibility problems as stated above (e.g. blocking bus stops and at junctions). He pointed towards some of these incidents when he continued in the same email:

> "It certainly makes sense for vehicles to be parked so that they only take up a single space. "

The issues with parking have continued. Local residents and I are concerned that these will worsen further with an expansion of the hospital. Another 4 consulting rooms would mean fewer parking spaces (where the extension will be) but more staff, meaning more staff will be more likely to use parking in the surrounding resident area.

Councillors and officers have been written to on several occasions about the ongoing issues, but our understanding is that there isn't a mechanism for enforcing a parking management plan because there is no specific condition or obligation. Hannah Thickett, Planning Enforcement Officer Confirmed in an email on 24 September 2019 that the veterinary hospital had been granted 41 parking spaces but because there are no parking controls there is little the council can do to enforce what had been granted:

> "As you rightly outline the approval shows 41 spaces with a mixture of staff and customer parking. Whilst this is the case, there are no restrictions to control on street parking in the area and in this instance, I cannot enforce against staff or customers parking on the street if they wish to do so. The most that could be done was contact to remind the Veterinary hospital of their 'parking plan' set out under condition 11."

In an email from Adam Walker dated 1st October 2019 he stated that he was "the officer who dealt with the planning application". He continued:

> "The highway safety impacts of the development were assessed as part of the application. It was concluded that the site could provide an acceptable level of

> parking provision and that this should be aided by a car park management plan which is in place."

Whilst it seems there's no ability to enforce use of the allocated staff parking, the above points should be taken into account when considering this further application. In summary:

- Donaldson's have not followed their existing parking plan
- A new development will mean less parking on site but more staff, meaning more pressure on local parking

Noise and disturbance to residents of the existing development

The hospital causes significant disturbance and noise, an MRI articulated lorry arrives once a month, the noise created disturbs all residents

The obtrusive lighting to habitable rooms (namely, two upstairs bedrooms) of my house and that of my neighbours. The light 'spills' beyond the boundary of the hospital, which has caused significant disturbance.

This should be borne in mind when considering the application for an extension to the hospital.

Construction

I note that the consultation response from KC Environmental Health (Pollution & Noise Control) noted that the construction work has the potential to "impact the amenity of nearby residents. Therefore, it will be necessary for a condition restricting construction working times".

When the hospital was first built there were clearly no controls in place as construction workers parked off site, blocked junctions, and construction began earlier than stated

. It is felt that conditions restricting constriction times and parking for future development would need to be closely monitored given residents' previous experience.

Residents' previous experience meant we were continually complaining about the conditions not being adhered to (noise and parking) Complaints were made in writing to Councillor Rob Walker, who was the responsible Cabinet member at the time. In an email of 19.06.2019, I wrote to him:

> "I am wondering if there if the construction companies involved have signed up to the Considerate Constructions Scheme (I am assuming Kirklees have one in place) and if Highway's regularly check the site? Over the weeks the contractors have been parking on residents' streets. Obstructing traffic views and pavements. It's inconsiderate and, in our opinion, dangerous. Somerset Road is already exceptionally busy. The site is big enough to accommodate all their vans."

Residents' are unclear how this will be controlled, and experiences to date should be considered when considering the current application.

Amenity

Finally, the site will cause further harm to the residential and visual amenity. The proposed development is situated within a residential area, open 24/7. The hospital is unusually large for the area, and a further extension would not be in keeping with the area. Again local residents believe this should be considered when considering the current application.

Residents' proposed improvements to the area

Though we have been told by Mr Walker that resident permit parking isn't something that can be introduced/imposed as part of a planning application, residents have since learnt that it can as part of planning obligations related to the planning application process. If Kirklees planning officers are minded to approve the application for an extension and alterations, we are asking that planning obligations are entered into, including residents only parking to mitigate the impact of further development proposed by Donaldson's Veterinary hospital. In addition we are proposing a other improvements with Donaldson Veterinary Hospital meeting all the costs, enforced through the planning process. The measures support pedestrians, local residents and public transport. The proposals ban parking near to junctions to assist both pedestrians crossing the roads at these locations and assist motor vehicles safely exiting the junctions.

In summary, the proposed improvements are as follows.

Somerset Road

Introduce residents only parking to remove the pressure on the main road. This would be in line with the majority of parking bays outside residents' homes on Somerset Road (further up and down the road). The introduction of a residential permit parking scheme is supported by over 60% of the residents and supported by evidence. There are 9 spaces which accommodate 10 households and their visitors.

Longley Road/Somerset Road

Double yellow lines on the corners of the junction. Parking on the junction causes visibility issues and makes it dangerous for pedestrians.

Highway Code 238-252 https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code)

Broadgate/Somerset Road

Double yellow lines on the corners of the junction. Parking causes visibility issues at the junction

Highway Code 238-252 https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code)

Longley Road

Bus stop markings. Cars are regularly parked blocking the bus stop which impacts on highway safety, pedestrian safety, and accessibility of public transport.

Highway Code 238-252 https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code)

Yours faithfully,