

DC Admin

From:
Sent: 27 November 2024 18:23
To: DC Admin
Subject: Planning Application 2023/91212: Land off Bankfield Drive, Holmbridge

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I strongly object to the above planning application on the grounds of highway safety.

Access to the proposed site is via Bankfield Drive or Laithe Bank Drive which have 1:5 and 1:6 gradients respectively at their steepest points (not 1:6 and 1:7). These roads form part of a 5 way junction which also involve Smithy Lane and Dobb Top Road. This junction is dangerous due to the gradients of the roads, no level standing, a dry stone wall with a 40 foot drop directly opposite Bankfield Drive and Laithe Bank Drive, and poor sight lines where a wall at the corner of a blind bend reduces the carriageway to a width of 4.8 metres (not 5 metres). Dobb Top Road, Smithy Lane and Bank Lane are narrow, almost totally devoid of footways and are effectively reduced to single track due to constant parked cars with there being no off road parking.

The junction contravenes the Kirklees Highways Design Guide and the National Planning Policy Framework in terms of gradients, poor sight lines, carriageway widths and lack of footways.

The junction is part of a rural school route for children walking to and from Hinchcliffe Mill J & I School, Holmbridge Pre School and Holmbridge Out of School Club, and by children attending Holmfirth High who walk down to the A6024 to catch the bus.

Despite there being only 49 dwellings on the current estate, there are a number of accidents/incidents at this junction every year. Especially (although not only) In icy or snowy conditions, vehicles lose control on Bankfield Drive and Laithe Bank Drive and plough into the retaining dry stone wall on the other side. When it gets to the stage that a hole in the wall is created, the council spend money to have it repaired. There have been many vehicle collisions at the junction which are unrecorded as police have not been called. Only 3 weeks ago when Kirklees Council Highways were repairing the footpaths on the estate, a council compression vehicle lost control and collided with a tarmac lorry at the bottom of Bankfield Drive in good weather conditions.

Bankfield Drive and Laithe Bank Drive are never gritted by the council. If ice or snow is forecast, a good number of residents on the estate attempt to park on Smithy Lane or Dobb Top Road in the evening to enable a safer morning commute. Due to a severe limit of parking spaces, many are unable to find a space and simply take a chance by driving out of the estate in the morning, some losing control on either Bankfield Drive or Laithe Bank Drive It is then in the lap of the gods as to whether the grit on Dobb Top Road is sufficient to stop a vehicle before it hits the wall. Only last week (Tuesday 19th November) at least 3 cars to my knowledge descended Bankfield Drive sideways. Any further development using these two roads as access would exacerbate the problem to an unacceptable degree.

Planning permission for development of this site has been refused in the past, most recently in 1993 it was refused firstly by Kirklees and later on appeal by the Planning Inspectorate who concluded 'The proposed development would lead to an increased hazard for road users and pedestrians' and that 'the danger would be sufficient to warrant dismissal of the appeal'.

Since 1993, many new houses have been built in the immediate vicinity. Holmfirth Vineyard and Cuddy's Farm have become popular tourist attractions, and the relatively new 'West Yorkshire Cycle Route' and 'Holme Valley Riverside Way' use the junction, especially at weekends. In 1993 car ownership stood at around 1.1 vehicles per household. Currently on the estate there are 49 houses and 107 vehicles. 2.18 vehicles per household, more than twice what it was in 1993. By ratio, 21 new homes would result in a further 46 vehicles and potentially up to 92 trips per day.

The proposed mitigation measures to the junction are relatively superficial. They make no difference to the layout of the junction as it cannot be altered. A new containment kerb which would extend 470mm from the wall is proposed. This kerb would be 325mm high to supposedly stop vehicles going fully through the wall. It fails to mention that the result of this would be to force schoolchildren and other road users to walk even further into the road than they do now, thus markedly increasing the chances of pedestrians being hit. This amounts to playing Russian Roulette with people's lives. The other two measures of new road markings and high friction road surfaces, although welcome, will have minimum impact in icy or snowy conditions. Further, high friction surfacing has a limited lifespan and requires maintenance – by whom?

How can Kirklees Council, after all the evidence, suddenly decide this junction is safe? Housebuilding is clearly being prioritised over general road and especially pedestrian safety. As residents we experience the incidents first hand. New planning guidelines cannot be used as an argument for development. The junction was correctly deemed to be unsafe in 1993 when there were far less cars on the road, it is therefore even more unsafe now. The vast majority of the 147 objections to date recognise this and quote road safety as a major concern. Not only have Kirklees Council ignored these comments, they have chosen to increase the number of dwellings on the application from 16 to 21.

Please reject this planning application.