

Upper Dearne Valley Environmental Trust (UDVET)

Response to Application No. 2024/62/91934/E – Proposed Development of 11 Wood Street, Skelmanthorpe, HD8 9BN.

OBJECTION, COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

Our Position on This Matter:

- We have the **STRONGEST POSSIBLE OBJECTION** to the proposed reduction of the existing boundary retaining wall running alongside Wood Street to 900mm. The wall is currently over twice this height and serves to support the cut through of Wood Street through a naturally occurring mound and bedrock.

Reducing its height is very likely to destabilise the existing two TPOs which are a feature of Wood Street and bring great amenity value. This reduction in height is simply not necessary.

It would appear to us that this proposal is a ‘back door’ attempt to achieve the real aim (i.e. the removal of the existing TPOS) of the earlier, quite rightly, refused planning application. (Ref. 2023/62/91649/E). **It is totally unacceptable and unnecessary.** It is also totally ingenuous for the Arboricultural Consultants to state The Tree Officer implied it would be acceptable to remove the Sycamore nearest the entrance because of its age. Trees Planning were clear: the latter proposal contravened LP33 and they mounted an objection.

What needs to happen before any development takes place is that the existing bulge in the retaining wall close to the entrance is repaired in a way which will not harm the roots of the TPO as recommended by the Tree Officer in response to the failed application last year and still not completed. This type of repair has been carried out successfully in previous years.

The wall immediately adjoining the existing entrance is already low and visibility should not be a problem given the existence of land on the righthand side which could also form part of the entrance (which appears to be gated) and poorly designed at present. (See Further Comments below).

- We would also like to point out that following the refusal of Application 2023/62/91949/E, the landowner has felled all non TPOS trees on the site and large sections of existing hedgerow, commencing in February, 2024. This included the Pine tree which once stood at the lefthand side of the entrance (although the Tree Report seems to think it is still standing!). The destruction of mature, healthy woodland trees on the site’s western boundary is of grave concern to us. Not only did these trees provide habitat for various bird species, including owls (both Tawny and Little Owls), but bats and squirrels etc. They formed a buffer to greenbelt land to the west and a natural wildlife corridor with adjoining trees. The stand of trees now has a break into which is being slotted two ugly, high 3 storey houses

on the current proposals. (See Further Comments on Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation below).

- As pointed out in our objection to the first application, It is still our view that the landowner/developers have deliberately destroyed the mature tree environment surrounding the existing property to subvert many Kirklees LPA policies e.g. LP30, LP33 and likely LP31 and LP32 and the explicit requirements in Supplementary Planning Documents such as:-

‘Housebuilders Design Guide SPD June 2021’, Section 6: Setting Design Parameters

Para 6.9 Trees and Hedgerows: *‘Planning permission will not be granted for developments which directly or indirectly threaten trees or woodlands of significant amenity’.....,Existing tree and landscape features should be incorporated into a scheme at the concept or initial design stage and sites should show a net gain in tree coverage.’*

‘Kirklees Highway Design Guide SPD, November 2019, Section 4 Street Trees, Para 4.13:

‘Designs should normally retain any valuable or important trees where they make a contribution to public amenity and distinctiveness of a specific location or contribute to the environment’

‘Biodiversity Net Gain in Kirklees – Technical Advice note on Biodiversity Net Gain requirements for developments within Kirklees’

Para 1.3.4 – ‘NPPG states that net gain is an approach to development that leaves the natural environment in a measurably better stated than it was beforehand’

Para 1.4.1 – ‘All development in Kirklees will be expected to avoid significant loss or harm to biodiversity through protection, mitigation and compensatory measures and seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity value and ecological links. As set out in Local Plan Policy LP30.....As per LP30, proposals will be required to

- i) *Result in no significant loss or harm to biodiversity.....’*
- ii) *Minimise impact on biodiversity and provide net biodiversity gains....’*

With regard to the actual development proposal, we would like to make the following comments and observations:

Development Plans and Design

- The type of housing proposed does not meet the local housing need which is for more affordable housing and housing for older people particularly. With its position close to the shops and bus stops and relatively easy walking, this site is ideal for much needed housing for older people, allowing them to downsize and free up family sized homes in the area. There is an oversupply of expensive, large 4 bedroom+ housing in Skelmanthorpe. The provision of new housing in the village

appears to be increasingly 'out of kilter' with the real needs of the local population and affordability parameters. New developments are not selling. There is a need for the LPA to take a more strategic view of housing applications in not only Skelmanthorpe, but the Denby Dale Ward as a whole in this respect. It is not an effective use of land if a development application does not fulfil the real and identified housing need in our area.

- The site in question forms the middle level of a former quarry and the eastern boundary not only has an existing hedge (seriously destroyed), but a steep drop behind it i.e. the old quarry face. This drop increases in depth as the boundary heads north. At the bottom of the drop in what was the floor of the quarry (and former Kirklees Highways Depot) is now a development of 7 detached houses (again built after the destruction of many trees) known as Holly Tree Grange. The face of the quarry forms the back edge of their gardens. The Type B house nearest to the eastern boundary is very close to the old quarry edge. In addition, No. 4 Holly Tree Grange has an extension at the back (not shown on the site plan) which needs further investigation as required separation distances may not be achieved.
- The applicant has failed to submit a west/east cross section across the site and into Holly Tree Grange to properly illustrate the topography involved.
- Parking space dominates the frontages of the proposed housing, against Principle 12 of the Kirklees Housebuilders Design Guide SPD, June 20221.
- The Type A dwellings are ugly 3 storey buildings and will have a negative, overbearing, domineering impact, not only on the site, but the whole immediate area around Wood Street, Station Road and even Elm Street, particularly given they are at the highest (western end of the site). They will also be visible from the west across the greenbelt (as the trees have been destroyed). The living areas and bedrooms are also likely to look directly into the gardens, house and balcony of the bungalow at 11A Wood Street (not shown on the site drawing). The separation distance from 9A Wood Street which also has a balcony at its rear also needs further investigation.
- According to the Kirklees Highway Design Guide 2019, Section 5.4 new, four bedroomed houses should provide three off-street parking spaces. The Type A houses provide only two parking spaces as they have a garage that is too narrow (internally appears to be 8ft 3" only) for modern sized vehicles and therefore, cannot be viewed as a genuine car parking space – they are merely family storage spaces.
- Similarly, the Type B houses whilst appearing to have a slightly larger garage space have a very restricted parking apron in the front of the properties and turning areas onto the driveway. Although a Tracking Diagram has been provided, it does not

show that turning is possible if another vehicle (likely to be an SUV) is parked on the apron.

- We believe the site to be overdeveloped, particularly at its west edge. Because of the site's topography and juxtaposition in relation to existing buildings, it is better suited to single/1.5 storey dwellings. A single bungalow with garage and utility under-draught at the western edge (with restored hedge and tree planting) would be far more visually arresting and allow more genuine space for vehicles and turning. Any possibility of outflow of vehicles onto Wood Street is totally unacceptable and must be prevented.
- We are pleased to see additional tree planting is proposed on site, although sadly they are unlikely to be the woodland tree types now lost. Sadly, it is our information that buyers of property often refuse access to landscape gardeners arriving to fulfil tree planting schemes. We would like to see the new trees planned within the residential properties to be part of any approval conditions and property deeds, if possible.
- Finally, we have some concern that the recutting of the driveway may impinge on the required root protection zones of the TPOs, especially the Sycamore closest to the driveway. We trust the Tree Officer (as well as other Statutory Consultees) will be gaining access to the site to take appropriate measurements and enforce suitable protections in addition to the wall issue mentioned earlier.

Boundary Treatments

- The photographs in the Middleton Bell Ecology capture well the environmental destruction vented on this site. However, we feel that the conclusions reached understate the total net habitat loss and should be reviewed further.

For example, the Consultant appears to be under the impression a new native species hedge is to be planted along the western boundary of the site. This is NOT shown/indicated on the submitted Site Plan.
- Close boarded wooden fences are NOT appropriate adjacent to the conservation area and wider environs which is dominated by dry stone walls and or hedges. They simply make new housing look like 'toy town forts' and debase any design and neighbourhood amenity value. They are not part of the local, Pennine heritage.
- In line with not only conservation area considerations, but Kirklees green and emerging Environmental Strategy, we believe the northern boundary should be a new native species hedge and 'green' fencing and drystone walls separate individual properties.
- The hedge at the Eastern boundary is going to need considerable repair and replanting (See Plate 7 in the Middleton Bell Ecology Report).

Access

- The Highways Statement is inadequate.
- Firstly, it fails to give an accurate description of Wood Street. It is basically a single width Lane serving 29 properties, only 3 of which do not possess a car and 4/5 need access for work related vehicles.
- Wood Street is unsuitable for large vehicles and has a sharp 90 degree bend at its western end which further restricts the type of vehicles that can pass.
- It fails to point out Wood Street has no footpaths, but forms part of a 'round walk' of Skelmanthorpe and is used by many pedestrians and dog walkers.
- It fails to point out, as does the Site Plan, the position of the driveways to Field House and The Barn House opposite the entrance to 11 Wood Street. The Tracking Diagram also fails to show these entrances and the position of the drystone walls.
- For this type of public highway, the increase in traffic from the proposed 4 dwellings, each with 3 cars will not be 'minimal'. Just 2 return car journeys/per car/per day will result in **336 extra movements per week.**

(12 vehicles x 4 movements = 48 movements/day = 48 x 7 = 336 movements/week)

This marks a substantial increase in traffic not only on Wood Street, but through its junctions with both Station Road and Huddersfield Road which are already dangerous owing to poor sightlines (caused by junction design and parked cars) plus speed and volume of traffic on these roads. The latter has been forgotten completely.

- It fails to point out that some residents need to park on the road which may have to be moved so RCVs (which have to reverse up Wood Street) can pass without risk of damage. An RCV recently damaged a lamppost the drystone wall (still unrepaired by KMC) of a listed building on Wood Street. If RCVs cannot gain access, residents do not get their bins emptied.
- There are no official passing places to pass as implied. Residents have to reverse or pull into the mouth of an existing driveway when faced with oncoming traffic.
- What is proposed is a gated development. The gates need to be positioned further up the access driveway so vehicles entering the site are completely off Wood Street whilst waiting for them to open. At present their position will cause obstruction to traffic flow and entry and egress from the driveways opposite.
- It fails to point out that an existing telegraph pole and street light will need to be repositioned.
- The design of the access itself appears to waste a triangular piece of land on the right

- hand side at its junction with Wood Street and needs incorporating in the design.
- The Highways Statement utterly fails to consider access to the site by construction plant and materials deliveries and the health and safety risks posed to residents, road users (both on Wood Street and Station Road) and pedestrians.
- **We believe a detailed Construction and Transport Management Plan should be submitted, reviewed and agreed PRIOR to any determination of this application.**

Drainage

- Environment Agency maps indicate a Flood Route which runs along the northern edge of properties on Wood Street, across this site and down to what is now Holly Tree Grange. We believe The LLFA will need to be satisfied that adequate drainage provision is made to prevent any flooding, particularly in view of the loss of trees which will have taken up many gallons of water. Four springs are known around Wood Street. Wood Street itself floods near its junction with Station Road after heavy rain.

Conclusion

We believe in its present form; this application fails to meet two of the three criteria for a sustainable development.

It fails to deliver the Social Objective in that it does not provide the type of housing desperately needed in the area (and well documented for years). It is not an effective use of land in this respect.

It certainly fails the Environmental Objective as it will not enhance the built and historic environments. It does not compensate for the environmental destruction already wreaked on this site and that likely to result to existing TPOs from the plans submitted.

The Economic Objective will only be achieved, if the developer will contract with firms local to Skelmanthorpe/Denby Dale. At present, this information is not provided.

Upper Dearne Valley Environment Trust (UDVET)

15 August, 2024