Castle Hill Planning Application 2024/93494 and 2018/93591

I make this submission as a resident of Almondbury Ward with a beautiful view of Castle Hill and as a Ward Councillor on behalf of residents as follows:

Summary of points I intend to raise:

1- 2018-93591-2024/93494
2- Highways- road congestion- Transport Statement Nov 2024
3- Fire safety assessment
4- Business Plan

2018-93591 and 2024/93494

1-This planning application eventually received planning approval on the 10th February 2022. The current application is a resubmission of this, or so I understand.
Arguments in the plans (2018/93591) hinged on the public benefits of the provision of public toilets which were weighted heavily against the assessed less than substantial harm?

Castle Hill is no ordinary site, it is an extra ordinary site which is unique to our Country and part of our national heritage. It is a special place, it is iconic, much loved and it is a famous landmark.

Families residents and people visiting have been going up to the top of Castle Hill for many many years to fly kites, take in the views and enjoy walks around the top of the hill site. Information Boards at the site display pictures on the wildlife there and an information board provides facts on the history of the site.

Tolson Museum has an excellent Castle Hill model and a display that tells the history of Castle Hill. Tolson Museum is set in Ravensknowle Park and schools already visit the display and Museum.

I have been informed and read that if and when Tolson Museum closes, the new Huddersfield Museum will have a display on Castle Hill in any event.

Local Plan Policies PLP 13 and PLP 16 -The proposal remains an out of town commercial development more suited to a town centre but was approved under 2018/93591

Castle Hill 2024/93494

So far a total of 90 objections have been documented and received in response to the amended plans making a combined total of 420 objections and comments received. In addition to this several statutory consultees have also raised objections and dissatisfaction.

As already stated, Castle Hill is hugely significant! Details of the plans submitted under the current application 2024/93494 and what this might mean for Castle Hill, the ancient scheduled monument and the surrounding area and now the submission of the amended plans, were not clear and there is a distinct lack of transparency and detail around the amended plans for example reference is made to approximately 100 covers for the restaurant, well precisely how many covers are planned for each evening? The previously approved application gave permission for no more than 70 people at any given time to be in the bars/ Café/ restaurant/ on Saturdays and Sundays only, including the terrace. The previous permission is silent though on Fridays and days during the week. This could result in many people going there on Friday nights and other evenings during the week?

Furthermore, reference is made to the new build occupying for the most part on the former footprint of the original pub/hotel. Well how much will not be on the former footprint?
It also appears that closing times in the evenings are still to be determined, but under 2018/93591, approval was given for closing times at 11pm for the restaurant and bar.

In addition, what is there to stop the Applicants making further plans in the future for additional buildings if they are allowed to build on land that does not form part of the original footprint?

2- The amended plans car park size (2024/93494)

Under 2018/93591, planning approval was granted for a car park for 32 spaces with an additional 5 disabled places giving a combined total of 37 parking spaces.

Kirklees Highways as statutory consultees made suggestions/comments based on a Transport Statement dated November 2019 commissioned by the Applicants, but Kirklees Highways admitted they did not have the empirical data to support the transport assessment carried out by the applicant's agents.
The Applicants agent's Transport assessment concludes:
"The development does not cause any negative impacts in terms of road safety or congestion and is therefore acceptable in planning terms"

Under this application 2024/93494, no comments have been made by Highways, but the Applicants have used the comments made in their Transport Statement commissioned by them dated November 2019 under the approved application 2018/93591 as evidence in their business plan and repeated the same assessment in their Transport Statement dated November 2024. This is not current. Any comments made by KirkleesHighways were based on the Transport statement from November 2019. The assessment referred to is out of date.

The Applicants Transport Statement under 2018/93591
(a)- noted "that while they did not consider it to be significant, there will be some increase in traffic in terms of visitors and also service vehicles".

(b) “Between 5-6pm, traffic flows are forecast to be in the region of 10 vehicles split 6-7 inbound- 4 outbound”
But under the current amended plans, the building will not be open to the Public between 5pm and 6pm.

It is my view that even 6-7 vehicles accessing the hill site controlled by traffic lights will cause issues around the junction with Lumb Lane regardless of the time.

(c) The Busiest time between 6-7pm with a peak traffic flow of 18 vehicles split 10 inbound with 8 outbound.

While the Applicants agents believe the time slot 6-7pm will be the busiest,
under the amended plans, the bar and restaurant will open from 6pm, but presumably vehicles will be arriving and leaving increasingly in the evenings particularly towards the end of the working week and weekends.

(d) They continue that the main traffic generators would be visitors to the hotel and restaurant, but this would be spread throughout the day. Again, this information is out of date as the word hotel has been dropped and the restaurant bar and visitors centre will only be open in the evenings, but the building will still have 6 bedrooms!

(e) The report continues:” traffic flows during the morning peak for the restaurant are considered to be insignificant.” Again, the restaurant will not be open during the day under the new plans.

“Taking into account the two main traffic generators”, (Which are the Hotel and restaurant as referred to in the Transport Statement dated November 2024 even though the Applicants have seemingly dropped plans for a hotel) during the day a forecasted increase in traffic during the morning peak hour would be in the region of 4 additional movements. During the evening peak, an increase of approximately 15 vehicles would be forecasted.” This suggests they are expecting only 15 vehicle movements between the peak 6pm to 7pm? Which day of the week are they referring to? I seriously question their calculations.

The transport statement continues that “the above does not take into account the trips generated by a visitor centre / exhibition facilities. The proposed size of this element of the development is 78 sq. metres and is difficult to forecast what the likely traffic generation would be as result of this use” Presumably though schools will book in advance so they will have an idea of the number of vehicles?

The statement goes on to predict “Nevertheless, adding another 6 trips during the morning peak and a similar number during the evening peak would be a robust scenario. As a result, the total traffic generation for the development would be in the region of 10 additional movements during the morning peak and 21 vehicle movements during the evening peak hour. The forecasted increase in traffic is not considered to be significant-“

(e) Traffic lights are proposed for the access road to control traffic movement on it but these will cause congestion from the junction of Lumb Lane with Ashes Lane along Lumb Lane to its junction with the hill site access road, traffic will back up and some people are likely to abandon their cars anywhere to walk up.

It is clear Highways must undertake a further appraisal of the amended plans and submit a report.

In addition, I request an independent assessment for Transport is requested by the Council, as I do not believe the data provided in November 2019 under the previous application 2018/93591 can be relied upon, as it is outdated and there are several other reasons including:

There are ever increasing numbers of vehicles on our roads and this is set to increase in the future as populations grow. In addition, where is the TRICs data?

I have grave concerns for highways safety! And it is concerning that Highways as statutory consultees remain silent in relation to the amended plans.
The Applicants have not provided any new assessment of the roads and vehicle movements or any TRICs data, it is imperative that the Council request an independent assessment for Transport.

The Business case states Castle Hill is set to serve 270,000 residents and more than 443,000 borough-wide.
This is with capacity of the car park at 37 max and does not include the 200 or so visiting schools! In addition, the public bus service is sporadic and Ashes Lane is not wide enough for a cycle way and the pavement is narrow. Furthermore, I would like to know if further accidents have been recorded since the last report filed under 2018/93591?

On the 28th February 2025, at approximately 6:58 pm I was caught up in congestion on Lumb Lane, just below the access road to Castle Hill which was blocked. This was due to vehicles being abandoned anywhere and everywhere there as people could not find anywhere to park as they wanted to walk to the top of the hill to view the planetary alignment. I have attached photos which I took at the time. Due to the road being blocked myself and my friend were late for an event. This is a scenario that will be played out time and time again if these plans receive approval. The road will not just be blocked at Castle Hill side though but Lumb Lane; Clough Hall Lane; Ashes Lane and possibly Hey Lane.

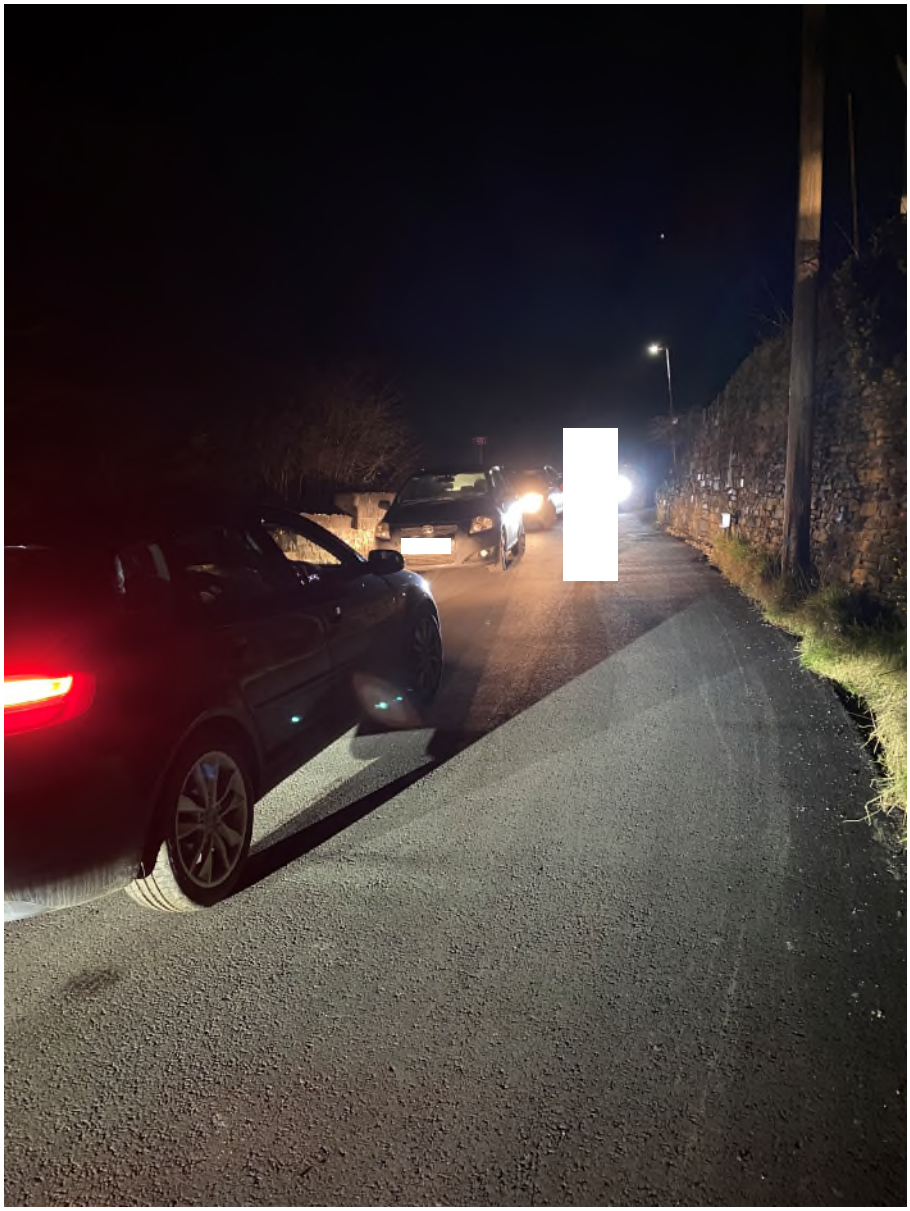
How would emergency vehicles get through the narrow lanes around Castle Hill? How would a local resident get to hospital urgently if they could not pass on the road? Such blockages are happening now and the bar, restaurant, café, 6 bedrooms, interpretation facility and gift shop have not even been built.

3.There was a recent wild- fire at Castle Hill, the earth is still charred and black. A fire safety assessment has not been submitted. This is concerning if these plans are approved, especially with the access road and congestion on Castle Hill Side and Lumb Lane as I experienced. Please request a fire safety assessment be carried out for the site.

4. According to the Business case, submitted under the current application 2024/93494. only the café; shop and interpretation room will be open during the day between 9am - 5pm and the restaurant and bar will open from 6pm to a time to be determined. This was 11pm under the previous planning application on Saturdays and Sundays only.

The Business Case-references a CIC, but no details are given and it's not clear where/how funds would be made available. Reference is made to an asset locked body being set up, but no details are provided. No figures are provided to understand viability of the scheme. Where is the complete Business Plan. I request an independent assessment be commissioned of the Business Plan.

Please see attached photographs taken 28th February 2025 at 6:58pm Planetary Alignment

Thank you

Councillor Alison Munro