From: Cllr Joshua Sheard <Joshua.Sheard@kirklees.gov.uk>
Sent: 24 January 2025 17:07
To: Jennifer Booth <Jennifer.Booth@kirklees.gov.uk>

Subject: Subject: Strong Objection to the Proposed Change of Use at 14 Harefield Drive, Birstall

Dear Jennifer,

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to you in my capacity as the local councillor for Birstall and Birkenshaw to formally raise my strong objection to the planning application for the proposed change of use from a residential dwelling (Use Class C3) to a children's residential home (Use Class C2) at 14 Harefield Drive, Birstall. I would like my comments to be noted down and published with the application.

I acknowledge the well-meaning intention behind this proposal, which seeks to provide care for vulnerable children in our community. However, after careful consideration and consultation with local residents, I have substantial concerns that the proposed change of use would have a detrimental impact on both the surrounding area and the welfare of the children who would be housed there.

The location of this proposed children's home in a predominantly residential area is deeply problematic. The local community is made up of families, many of whom are likely to be concerned about the proposed shift in the type of accommodation in this community. The change of use would not only alter the character of the area, but it would also introduce a level of uncertainty and discomfort for residents. Despite assurances regarding anti-social behaviour and safety, there are legitimate fears that the presence of a children's residential facility could attract unwanted attention and, in the worst case, expose the area to an increased risk of incidents that could affect local safety and security.

While the supporting planning statement as part of the application mentions a staff-to-child ratio of 1:1 and a commitment to maintaining a high level of supervision, there are still unanswered questions about the broader implications of the facility's presence. How will local residents be assured that this facility will not contribute to a rise in anti-social behaviour or security issues, given the vulnerable nature of the children in care and the wide range of complex needs they may have? Given the proximity to residential properties, there is the potential for a disturbing level of noise, particularly in the evening, which would negatively impact the lives of local families.

A further concern is the proposed parking arrangements, which are grossly inadequate for the scale of the operation. The planning application states that there is parking for only two vehicles, which, given the nature of the children's home and its staffing requirements, is simply not enough. The proposed tandem parking system would require staff members to coordinate their schedules meticulously, and while this may work in theory, it is highly impractical and poses a risk of traffic congestion and disruption. The area surrounding 14 Harefield Drive is already a busy residential zone, and additional vehicles from staff, social workers, and other visitors will lead to parking spillover onto nearby streets, causing inconvenience to local residents.

Moreover, the cumulative impact of this traffic congestion—particularly during shift changes—could significantly affect the overall flow of the community and create a stressful environment for families who rely on on-street parking. This is not a trivial concern, as it directly impacts the daily lives of families who live nearby. It will especially exacerbate the already on-going issue with parking on Windmill Lane, Upper Batley Lane and Ridgway Drive during school pick-up and drop-off hours, which I have been working on the case for a number of months and which you can confirm with the highways department.

From a child welfare perspective, I am also deeply concerned about whether the property at 14 Harefield Drive is adequately suited to meet the needs of vulnerable children. The property is located in a quiet residential area, but its proximity to other homes limits the available space for recreational or therapeutic activities. The outdoor space is described as a large garden, but in reality, it is unlikely to provide the necessary facilities for children to play safely and engage in outdoor activities that support their development. Given that outdoor space is vital for children's physical and mental well-being, the lack of appropriate facilities could hinder their overall care and development.

Furthermore, there are serious concerns about the suitability of this site for children with varying levels of need. While the planning statement indicates that the facility will be staffed with qualified professionals, the limited size and scope of the property raises questions about its ability to cater to children with more complex emotional and behavioural needs. Without the necessary resources and space to manage such children effectively, there is a risk that the facility will struggle to maintain a high standard of care, ultimately compromising the welfare of the very children it aims to support.

In addition to the immediate concerns, I fear that this development could set a precedent for future conversions of residential properties into children's homes, further eroding the character of the local area and potentially leading to a clustering effect. If this change of use is granted, it may open the door to additional applications in close proximity, which would dramatically alter the nature of our community and put further strain on local services.

It is crucial to understand that Birstall, while a welcoming community, is not a location designed to accommodate the complexities of children's residential care within its tightly-knit residential streets. The infrastructure simply is not equipped to handle such a development without significant disruption to the community's peace, safety, and well-being.

While I recognise the importance of providing appropriate care for vulnerable children, I strongly believe that this particular proposal is not the right solution for Birstall. The impact on the local residents, concerns about anti-social behaviour, inadequate parking, and the welfare of the children themselves present significant issues that cannot be overlooked.

I urge you to take into account the considerable concerns of the local community, which I, as their representative, am obliged to voice, and carefully reconsider this planning application. The suitability of the property for such a use, the long-term consequences for the local area, and the well-being of the children housed there should all be carefully re-evaluated before any decision is made. I would

also invite the planning department to join me in organising a local meeting in the Howden Clough area to listen to the concerns of residents in person to get a better perspective of the issue at hand.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I trust that you will give these concerns the serious consideration they deserve.

Cllr Joshua Sheard
Birstall, Birkenshaw & East Bierley
Conservative Party