

To – Kirklees Planning Dept F.A.O. Jennifer Booth or deputy case officer
From – sent By Email Only

PLEASE NOTE:

In accordance with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, and Kirklees Council's own data-protection policy, I do not consent to the publication of any of my personal data, including my name, home address, email, and any other identifiable details. I request that all personal identifiers be fully redacted before my comments are made publicly available on the planning register. Any processing or disclosure beyond what is strictly necessary for the statutory planning process would be a breach of data-protection law. Thank you.

**Subject: Objection to Planning Application 2026/62/90484E
Proposed Children's Care Home – Change of use from residential to C2 residential institutions**

Location - 143 Church Lane, Gomersal
Applicant – Harmony House Retreat Ltd, Eddie Elliott-Smith
Case officer – Jennifer Booth
Consultation Ends 23rd March 2026

Dear Jennifer (Kirklees Planning Department)

Whilst I acknowledge and accept that there is a need for housing of this nature, I write to express my deep concerns about the proposals in relation to the above planning application and how I believe that the location and the proposed development of the property is unsuitable.

Firstly, building work started with vigour late last year, residents and the general public utilising Church Lane experienced significant issues with building materials/waste just left on the side of the pavement in an unsafe manner. The amount of debris left on the footpath was unacceptable and hazardous to anybody walking past the dwelling. It appears the "build" is not of a professional nature as there has been total disregard for people using this road since the start.

From a search of the planning applications on Kirklees website, I can see that there was no prior planning applications submitted to cover any of this work. There has been 7 day working of extended hours which would be in breach of Kirklees planning regulations had a planning application been submitted immediately to cover the intended work. This brings into question the applicant's transparency/integrity - Has the applicant failed to follow the required procedures, allowing the development to proceed without notice and effectively remain under the radar?"

In addition to this there has been at least two large and sometimes more vehicles parked on the pavement thereby forcing pedestrians to either navigate the debris or walk into the road to get by. This is something I have personally witnessed and experienced. The parking is also opposite a bus stop and has caused traffic build up when a bus stops to collect/drop off passengers. Though it must be noted that since this application was submitted one of the

vans is now parking on the pavement directly on the bus stop on the opposite side of the road and the other remains parked fully on the pavement outside number 143. (Photos to evidence this are available).

Though Church Lane is a restricted 30MPH road in reality it is a very fast and busy road where vehicles often overtake on the wrong side of the carriageway at speed. There have been numerous complaints to West Yorkshire Police in regard to speeding at this location which has led to enhanced police patrols and the camera van been deployed on numerous occasions. It is also used by a lot of driving instructors who regular cross over the lanes and practice reversing and hill starts. These drivers are learners and as such can make mistakes and not have the reactions of a careful and competent driver.

The parking issues have severely impacted drivers attempting to exit and enter The Coppice safely. The inconsiderate parking has significantly reduced sight lines for anybody attempting to exit The Coppice. This along with the speeding issues on this road is just an accident waiting to happen and I cannot truly believe that this will not be exacerbated with the change of use to a C2 that will bring more vehicles to the location. (Please see further parking concerns below).

I have read the supporting information provided with the planning application which raises some concerns. The proposal would see the conversion of a standard family home into a 24 hour institutional facility, supported by rotating staff and visiting professionals. I note that the application proposes housing for up to four potentially high-needs young people aged 7–18 who have been displaced from family or a victim of trauma, with a stated 1:1 staffing ratio. However, the application also states that only three full-time equivalent staff plus one manager will be employed. This is insufficient to provide 1:1 care on a 24-hour basis and raises serious concerns about the viability of the staffing model. The detail is inadequate and inconsistent in relation to staffing and brings into question the operational day to day running of the home and the ability to manage, supervised and assist children with trauma related needs whilst mitigating any impact on the surrounding community/area.

Without a robust management model, the council cannot be satisfied that the home will operate safely or without harm to the surrounding community.

I note that the company was only registered in December 2024 and with the lack of detail in the management plan it raises the question of what experience and knowledge does the company possess to run a care home of this nature, one where the very vulnerable of our society will be living.

If the home is under-staffed it is likely to result in increased noise, disturbance, unmanaged incidents and unplanned visits by external professionals such as the Police. This may lead to unwanted behaviour in the area and also have a detrimental effect on local community cohesion, wellbeing and support.

There is insufficient on-site parking to facilitate the comings and goings of staff across multiple shifts, visiting families, social workers, therapists, cleaners and other professionals such as the emergency services. The proposal states that it has added one more parking

space at the location however when you take into account that the garage could have been utilised as parking but has now been converted into a room, thereby in reality not adding any further parking to the location. The application provides only two on-site parking spaces. This is inadequate for the needs of the home and will ultimately lead to inappropriate parking in the locality causing a nuisance to residents, increasing congestion and obstructing visibility at nearby junctions as has already been experienced just in the development phase.

Compounding this, there is a bus stop directly opposite the property, which already restricts on-street parking and creates pinch points for traffic flow. It should also be noted that Church Lane becomes a diversion route for traffic when there are incidents on the nearby M62 causing considerable congestion and tailbacks from the signal-controlled junction at the top.

The property sits approximately 10 metres from its junction with The Coppice, which already requires careful manoeuvring by drivers due to the issues with parking. Introducing a facility with inadequate parking to accommodate even the basic staffing levels will increase the safety risk to all road users. In addition, due to the proximity to the property the mouth of The Coppice may be utilised as a turning point thereby affecting the quality of resident's peace and quiet especially late at night. All these point raises clear highway safety risks particularly during peak hours.

I note that the applicant states that the proposal is "similar to a typical family dwelling" how can this be true? 4 high-needs children that must be supervised at all times plus rotating staff is not comparable to a single household. Along with a 24-hour operation with shift changes, cars arriving/leaving, late-evening arrivals, and potential behavioural incidents will inevitably generate noise and disturbance. This level of activities is far greater than that of a typical residential property and represents an over intensification of use that is unsuitable for Church Lane which is primarily a more mature residential area and the proposed use is incompatible with the quiet enjoyment expected by neighbouring properties.

The application also makes mention of the need for each young person to be supervised at all times including when leaving the premises. If this level of supervision is required to what extent are these children a danger to themselves, from others or to others? It is well documented that unauthorised absence and absconding from such properties is a regular occurrence. Not only does this create safeguarding issues for the child who is leaving a 24x7 supervised home environment into a locality that they may not be familiar with that is located on a busy road and has several open potentially dangerous areas of land including in front and behind the property. The safeguarding of all residents and members of the public using the area should also be considered.

Through my previous professional experience dealing with community-level issues, I have first-hand knowledge of the challenges that residential children's homes can introduce when placed in unsuitable areas. My concerns are supported by well-documented government and Ofsted evidence.

Government data from the Department for Education (DfE) shows that children placed in residential care often present with complex behavioural and emotional needs, including

impulsivity, difficulty with boundaries, and challenges responding to authority. These characteristics are highlighted in the DfE's annual Characteristics of Children in Need statistics and the Children's Homes Data Pack, which confirm that young people in such settings frequently require high levels of supervision and structured support.

National Ofsted reports also consistently note that children in residential homes may struggle with emotional regulation, self-restraint, and engagement with authority figures, often due to previous trauma or instability. These behavioural challenges can lead to increased incidents requiring intervention from local services, including missing-from-home episodes, safeguarding concerns, and neighbourhood disruption.

This steady flow of visitors brings more vehicles to the area, compounding the concerns already pointed out above. These practical issues can also heighten the home's visibility within the neighbourhood and add to wider community concerns.

These are not criticisms of the children themselves — they are recognised support needs acknowledged by the government, Ofsted, and the Local Government Association. However, they do demonstrate that such homes must be placed in locations that can safely accommodate the associated risks and demands.

Based on this evidence, and my own professional experience, I am acutely aware of how these behaviours can impact a residential neighbourhood when not supported within a highly structured environment. Increased disturbances, safeguarding incidents, and pressure on local services are all well-documented outcomes when homes of this nature are placed in areas that lack the infrastructure to manage them.

Has a Community Impact Assessment been completed? Have any safeguarding risks to and from the community been identified?

The applicant states *"We aim to provide a home in which children and young people feel secure and valued"* and *"We will work collaboratively with the neighbours to ensure a positive relationship"* surely with the strength of feeling of local residents this will not be viable as there may be resentment/tension in the local community if this was to go ahead. The actions of the applicant this far have not led us to believe they have any concerns for the residents at the forefront of their plans.

As far as I am aware there are no other residential homes in the immediate area and therefore the introduction of a C2 residential institution within a C3 dwellinghouse would be out of keeping with the neighbourhood's existing character. In addition, the scale of the extension further reinforces the shift from a family dwelling to an institutional facility. The property has already significantly changed in its appearance as all the bay windows, metal balustrades above the garage and porch and the imposing pillars have all have been removed along with the garage been bricked up to convert into a living accommodation thus altering the character and integrity of the original property and its impact on the street scene. The majority of houses in the locality have a garage, I would suggest that a house of this size would require such an amenity.

The property is located within a greenbelt area. I would ask the planning officer to consider whether or not this is a case of over development of the original footprint of the property. There is very little outdoor space if you take into account the outside area that will remain

should the development go ahead; it should be questioned whether this is suitable to accommodate the young people who may take up residence. The plans states that there will be gate entrance/exit access control, this will further reduce garden/outdoor space along with the allocated parking spaces.

If they require 24x7 supervision surely the whole grounds require to be secure to combat any attempt to leave? How will this look? Will this feel imposing/restricting to the children? If anyone knows anything about outdoor spaces, they will understand that for children who have experienced any kind of mental health issues, this will impact their mental capacity in terms of their well-being.

I firmly believe that this specific location is unsuitable for such a facility and that granting planning permission would contravene existing council policies, pose significant road safety issues, safeguarding concerns, and adversely impact on health and the quality of life of the local community. Given these considerations, I strongly urge the planning authorities to deny the application for change of use.

I trust that my concerns will be fully noted and considered prior to any final decision being made.

PLEASE NOTE:

In accordance with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, and Kirklees Council's own data-protection policy, I do not consent to the publication of any of my personal data, including my name, home address, email, and any other identifiable details. I request that all personal identifiers be fully redacted before my comments are made publicly available on the planning register. Any processing or disclosure beyond what is strictly necessary for the statutory planning process would be a breach of data-protection law. Thank you.