

Formal Planning Objection

Re: Planning Application 2026/62/90484/E – Change of Use from dwelling to C2 for 4 children, erection of first floor extension and front porch, internal and external alterations.

Property: 143 Church Lane, Gomersal, BD19 4QN

Applicant: Eddie Elliott Smith / Sarah Elliott Smith. Harmony House Retreat Ltd

Dear Jennifer Booth,

I write to formally object to the planning application **2026/62/90484/E** for the proposed change of use of *143 Church Lane, Gomersal, BD19 4QN* from a residential dwelling to a children's residential care home.

While I recognise the importance of providing appropriate accommodation and support for vulnerable young people, I believe that the proposed location and operational arrangements would create significant planning concerns. These concerns relate to residential amenity, highway safety, design suitability, safeguarding considerations, and the character of the residential area.

Under the planning framework established by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and national policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), local authorities must ensure that development proposals promote safe, inclusive and well-designed communities while protecting the amenity of existing residents. In addition, policies within the Kirklees Local Plan require that new developments do not create unacceptable impacts on neighbouring residents or the surrounding area.

My objections are outlined below.

1. Unlawful Scale of Proposed Extensions

I wish to raise a serious concern regarding the scale of the proposed extensions when considered alongside existing unauthorised additions to the property; to give context, a number of unauthorised extension works had been completed by the previous owners. The original footprint of the dwelling is approximately **74m²**. The proposed extension, combined with previously constructed unauthorised extensions, would increase the total footprint by approximately **82m²**, representing a **111% increase** over the original dwelling footprint. This level of expansion is clearly excessive and appears to conflict with the requirements of the Kirklees Local Plan Policy LP57, which states that the original dwelling should remain the dominant element in both size and appearance. Furthermore, the proposal appears to directly contradict Kirklees Local Plan Policy LP24, which states that extensions should not exceed the footprint of the original dwelling. When the proposed works are assessed cumulatively with the unauthorised extensions already constructed, it is evident that the development would result in a property that is significantly larger than the original house and therefore fails to comply with these policies. On this basis, the proposal represents an overdevelopment of the site and should be refused.

2. Inadequate Outdoor Space and Impact on Resident Wellbeing

The proposed property provides extremely limited outdoor space relative to the number of residents proposed (up to four children).

Children in residential care often have significant physical and emotional needs. Suitable outdoor space is essential to support physical activity, wellbeing, and healthy development. The limited size of the garden and surrounding space at this property raises concerns about whether it is appropriate for accommodating multiple residents with potentially complex needs.

The NPPF emphasises that developments should promote healthy communities and ensure that living environments support wellbeing. In my view, the property does not provide sufficient space to meet these expectations.

3. Loss of Privacy and Overlooking for the neighbouring homes

we have significant concerns regarding privacy and overlooking. The layout of the property, combined with its large floor-to-ceiling windows on the front elevation and the positioning of upper-floor circulation spaces such as the landing, would result in clear and direct sightlines towards neighbouring homes and gardens. The proposed use would involve multiple residents and staff regularly occupying these areas throughout the day and night, which would substantially increase the potential for overlooking compared to the existing use as a single private dwelling. This would materially reduce the level of privacy currently enjoyed by neighbouring properties, particularly given the close proximity between the two houses. Policies within the Kirklees Local Plan and national guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework require development proposals to safeguard the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers and prevent unacceptable levels of overlooking or loss of privacy. In our view, the proposed change of use would significantly intensify activity within the property and create a harmful level of overlooking and loss of residential privacy for adjoining residents.

4. Loss of Privacy for Residents

The property plans propose a very large floor-to-ceiling window on the front elevation which directly faces the public highway.

This design would leave residents, including potentially vulnerable children, highly visible to the public when occupying the entrance hall or upper landing areas. Such a lack of privacy may be detrimental to the emotional wellbeing and safeguarding of the residents themselves.

This raises questions about whether the property is appropriately designed to accommodate vulnerable children in accordance with safeguarding principles and national care standards.

5. Noise and Disturbance from Staff Shift Changes

We are also concerned about the likely increase in noise and disturbance associated with the operational requirements of a children's residential home. The proposal indicates that staff will operate on shift patterns, with staff changeovers occurring at least twice daily, every day of the week. These shift changes are likely to take place during early morning and late evening hours, which would fall within periods normally considered unsociable in a quiet residential area. The arrival and departure of multiple staff members, vehicle movements, car doors, conversations, and general activity associated with shift handovers would inevitably generate regular noise and disturbance directly adjacent to neighbouring homes. Unlike a typical single household, this operational pattern represents a continual commercial-style activity occurring throughout the year. This level of activity would materially increase noise and disturbance and would be harmful to the residential amenity currently experienced by neighbouring residents. Planning policy within the Kirklees Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework requires that new development should not create unacceptable living conditions for existing residents, and we believe the proposed use would conflict with these objectives.

6. Highway Safety and Parking Concerns

One of the most significant planning concerns relates to traffic and parking provision. The property currently provides only **two off-street parking spaces**. However, the operation of a children's home would likely involve:

- Multiple staff members working across shifts
- Visiting social workers
- Ofsted inspectors

- Family members visiting residents
- Support staff and service providers

Research from the Department for Education (DFE-RR201, 2010) indicates that children in care homes often maintain regular contact with family members, with over half receiving weekly face-to-face visits.

This would likely generate significant additional vehicle movements and parking demand in an area already experiencing congestion.

Church Lane is a busy road with a bus stop directly opposite the property. The combination of buses stopping, vehicles attempting to park, staff shift changes, and visitor parking could create a serious traffic bottleneck.

This may conflict with highway safety objectives contained within the NPPF and the Kirklees Local Plan, which require developments to provide safe and suitable access arrangements.

7. Existing Parking and Road Safety Issues

Parking associated with renovation works at the property has already created significant problems for neighbouring residents.

Contractor vehicles, including large vans, have frequently parked on the road outside the property, creating dangerous blind spots for residents exiting their driveways and for vehicles merging onto Church Lane from The Coppice.

If the proposed care home generates additional daily vehicle movements and on-street parking, these hazards are likely to become permanent. This could significantly increase the risk of road traffic accidents.

8. Security and Safeguarding Concerns

The property layout raises concerns regarding safeguarding and resident safety.

For example:

- Upper-floor windows that may function as fire escapes could allow residents to access a flat roof and exit the property.
- Boundary fencing between neighbouring properties is currently low and easily climbable.
- The property is located directly opposite a bus stop with frequent services to Huddersfield and Leeds.

Research by Biehal and Wade (2000) found that children in residential care are significantly more likely to go missing compared with those in foster care. Government research (DFE-RR201, 2010) reported that 60% of residents in surveyed homes had gone missing within a six-month period. Given these statistics, the proposed site raises concerns about whether adequate safeguarding measures can realistically be implemented.

9. Staffing Levels and Operational Concerns

The proposal suggests staffing arrangements consisting of two staff members during the day and two overnight.

Given the possibility that residents could be older teenagers aged 17–18 and may present behavioural challenges, a staff-to-resident ratio of 1:2 could present operational risks.

Government guidance emphasises that strong and stable relationships between residents and staff are critical to positive outcomes in residential care settings. Frequent shift changes and limited staffing may make it difficult to maintain consistent relationships and supervision.

10. Impact on the Character of the Area

Church Lane is a quiet residential area with a predominantly older demographic.

The proposed change of use represents a significant departure from the existing character of the neighbourhood. Planning policy within the Kirklees Local Plan requires developments to integrate well with their surroundings and avoid creating significant disruption to established residential communities.

The scale of operational activity associated with a children's home, including staff shifts, visitors, and service vehicles, risks fundamentally altering the character of this quiet residential street.

11. Conduct and Previous Planning Concerns

There have already been instances of disruptive behaviour associated with renovation works at the property, including:

- Contractor vehicles blocking pavements and driveways
- Parking that obstructs visibility for vehicles leaving nearby properties
- Vehicles blocking pedestrian access, including routes used by schoolchildren and elderly residents

These issues raise concerns about whether the site can realistically be managed in a way that respects neighbouring residents.

12. Potential Increase in Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime

Research into children's residential care has demonstrated that many residents have experienced difficult backgrounds and may display challenging behaviours.

For example, research by Sinclair and Gibbs (1998) found that in a study of 48 residential homes, approximately 40% of residents without previous criminal records obtained one after staying in residential care for six months.

Church Lane is currently an extremely low-crime residential area. Data from 2026 indicates approximately 40.5 incidents per 1,000 residents. Introducing a facility where residents may statistically have a higher likelihood of behavioural issues could increase demands on local policing and create concerns for neighbouring residents.

While this issue must be handled sensitively, it remains a legitimate planning consideration when assessing the suitability of a location for a particular use.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above, I respectfully request that Kirklees Council refuse this application.

The proposed change of use raises serious concerns relating to:

- Residential amenity
- Highway safety and parking provision
- Safeguarding and security
- Suitability of the property for vulnerable residents
- Impact on the character of the neighbourhood

I believe that the property is not an appropriate location for a children's residential home and that approving this application would conflict with both national planning policy and the objectives of the Kirklees Local Plan.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this objection.