

12th March 2026

Objection to Planning Application 2026/62/90484/E

Re: Proposed Use of 143 Church Lane, Gomersal, as a 5-Bed Residential Children's Care Home (Use Class C2)

Dear Sir/Madam,

Planning Objection – Professional Concerns Regarding Suitability for Children's Residential Care

As a registered Social Worker, I fully support the need for high-quality residential provision for vulnerable children. However, the suitability of this specific location, the safety of the proposed environment, and the impact on the surrounding community raise significant professional concerns. The needs of the children who would live in this home must be the primary consideration, and in my professional view, this site cannot provide the safe, stable, and therapeutic environment required.

Complex Needs and Age Mix

The application proposes accommodating children aged **7–18** with **complex mental health, behavioural, neurodevelopmental, and physical needs**. These needs frequently overlap and require carefully controlled, specialist environments.

A mixed age range of this breadth presents clear safeguarding and compatibility risks:

- Younger children may be exposed to behaviours they cannot understand or manage.
- Older adolescents with high-risk or trauma-related behaviours may not receive age-appropriate support in a small domestic setting.
- Homes supporting complex needs typically require robust space, staffing, and environmental controls that this property cannot provide.

The proposed environment is not suitable for such a diverse and high-needs cohort.

Site Suitability and Impact on Neighbours

The property and its setting are fundamentally unsuitable for a children's home of this nature.

- **Outdoor space is extremely limited**, offering no safe area for regulation, therapeutic activity, or supervised play.
- The **rear elevation directly overlooks neighbouring homes**, intensifying the impact of an already constrained plot and creating privacy issues for both residents and neighbours.

- The likely need for **CCTV** to manage safeguarding risks would compromise the privacy of neighbouring households and the dignity of the children.
- Increased noise, shift changes, and professional visits would significantly alter the quiet residential character of Church Lane and The Coppice.

The environment is neither therapeutic nor proportionate to the needs of the children who would live there.

Parking, Visibility, and Road Safety

The proposal significantly underestimates the level of activity associated with a high-needs children's home.

- Staff working in shifts, visiting professionals, and transport for education and appointments will increase parking demand.
- The entrance to The Coppice already suffers from **restricted visibility**, and additional vehicles will increase the risk of accidents.
- Church Lane is a **fast-moving road with a history of speeding**, regularly monitored by police. Any further obstruction or roadside parking presents a clear hazard.
- These risks affect not only neighbours and road users but also the children living at 143 Church Lane, who may struggle to enter or exit safely.

From a safeguarding perspective, the road environment is wholly unsuitable.

Fire Safety and Absconsion Risks

The layout raises serious concerns regarding fire safety and the ability to maintain a secure environment.

- Proposed fire exits appear to lead onto a **flat roof**, creating an unsafe and easily accessible absconsion route.
- **Low boundaries** and proximity to neighbouring gardens reduce the ability to maintain a safe perimeter.
- A **bus stop directly opposite** the property provides rapid access to Leeds and Bradford, increasing absconsion risk before staff can intervene.
- Adjacent farmland contains **livestock and heavy machinery**, posing further risks should a child abscond.

For children with complex behavioural or mental health needs, these risks are significant and unacceptable.

Local Demographic Context

The immediate area includes two groups who may be particularly affected:

- **The Coppice**, which is densely populated with families and young children.

- **Church Lane**, which has a high proportion of older residents, many of whom are vulnerable or rely on a quiet, stable environment.

Introducing a high-needs institutional use into an area with both vulnerable children and vulnerable adults raises clear concerns about noise, safety, and compatibility.

Lack of Community Engagement

Substantial building works have been ongoing for months prior to the submission of this application, with **no engagement** with residents. This has caused considerable concern and suggests limited regard for due process or the complexities of operating a high-needs children's home in such a constrained location.

Meaningful engagement is a core expectation of good-quality children's residential care and is emphasised in national planning policy. Its absence here is troubling.

Conclusion

The proposal conflicts with key policies of the Kirklees Local Plan, including **LP24 (Design)**, **LP52 (Protection and Improvement of Environmental Quality)**, and **LP47 (Healthy, Safe and Active Travel)**. Issues relating to:

- safeguarding
- amenity and privacy
- overdevelopment
- fire safety
- absconsion risk
- road safety
- suitability of the environment for vulnerable children

demonstrate that this site is not appropriate for a children's home of this nature.

I respectfully request that the planning authority give full weight to these concerns when determining the application and consider whether the welfare and safety of the children can genuinely be safeguarded in this location.

Yours faithfully,