

## **Kirklees Rural Sub-Area Matter 44 with reference to H626 : Land to the west of Bankfield Drive :**

### **Hearing Statement**

There is no possibility to improve the local highway network in the immediate locality to support the development of site H626 singularly, or in combination with site SL2331. This is because the boundaries of the road network are private housing (hence widths cannot be increased) and it is impossible to reduce gradients or improve sightlines.

The reasons the network is already inadequate are as follows :

1. The only access to the site is via Bankfield Drive or Laithe Bank Drive which have 1 : 5 and 1 : 6 gradients respectively.

These roads have no level standing at the dangerous 5 way junction, which also involves Smithy Lane and Dobb Top Road. The junction intersects at acute angles and has very poor sightlines due to the steep gradient of Smithy Lane coupled with a high wall. Visibility to the West of the Bankfield Drive, Dobb Top Road, Smithy Lane junction is therefore blocked. Interestingly, on the Kirklees accessibility comments (draft Local Plan) regarding H626 they say that 'a potential new access to the site off Dobb Top Road would not be suitable due to its narrow carriageway (4.0 metres wall to wall at the junction) and poor junction with Smithy Lane / Bankfield Drive'.

2. Dobb Top Road, Smithy Lane and Bank Lane (the road that joins the A6024) are narrow with no footways. Smithy Lane and Bank Lane also have constant parked cars as there is no off road parking for residents. These 3 roads with no footways are therefore reduced to single track (even though they are a bus route) and are an official Rural School Route for children walking to and from Hinchcliffe Mill J & I School, Holmbridge Pre-school, and Holmbridge Out of School Club, as well as being used by children who walk down to catch the school bus on the A6024. At the dangerous 5 way junction, Smithy Lane has a width wall to wall of 4.7 metres, restricting traffic movement to single track. This width is already inadequate before even taking into account the dangers highlighted.

3. The dangers to pedestrians, vehicles and other road users associated with the 5 way junction have resulted in numerous types of accidents over the years, however, the only incidents Kirklees Council may be officially aware of in the last 5 years are those where cars have lost control down either Bankfield Drive or Laithe Bank Drive, gone straight across Dobb Top Road and damaged the wall on the other side which they will have records of repairing on 3 occasions. Fortunately, no car has yet gone fully through the wall as there is a 30+ metre sheer drop on the other side.

4. The estate feeding off Bankfield Drive and Laithe Bank Drive currently has 47 homes and 97 cars, an average of 2.1 cars per household. This is well above the national average and is due to the inaccessibility of the village and poor public transport. In the Kirklees document "Additional evidence relating to distribution of growth between settlements" dated Dec 2017, Holmbridge has "the second lowest accessibility score in the (Kirklees Rural) sub-area, reflective of long public transport journey times." The NPPF states that local planning authorities should take into account *local* car ownership levels in their plans.

In 1992/1993, planning permission for a development of 39 dwellings on the site was rejected, first by Kirklees and later on appeal by the Planning Inspectorate for the Department of the Environment who concluded 'The proposed development would lead to an increased hazard for other road users and pedestrians' and that 'the danger would be sufficient to warrant dismissal of the appeal'.

The concerns were: -

- increased risk of vehicular and pedestrian hazards due to the narrow minor road network,
- the steep gradients of Smithy Lane, Bankfield Drive and Laithe Bank Drive,
- the lack of footways on Dobb Top Road, Smithy Lane and Bank Lane,
- increased traffic on the A6024.

Since 1993 car ownership in the UK generally has increased by 60%. Other factors have also resulted in a gradual and significant intensification of use on this local road network. 38 new houses have

been built or have planning permission from the top of Dobb Lane to the end of Bank Lane. Holmfirth Vineyard and Cuddy's farm have become popular tourist attractions, the relatively new and increasingly well used West Yorkshire Cycle Route and Holme Valley Riverside Way also run along Dobb Top Road, Smithy Lane and Bank Lane and the Clarence Mills complex, accessed off Smithy Lane, is now attracting visitors. The local road network is therefore used significantly more than it was in 1993 and is consequently well over capacity given its numerous inadequacies. It simply cannot sustain any further development. We therefore vigorously challenge Kirklees Council's opinion that it would 'not be seen as a significant intensification of use on the local highway network'. The intensification has already happened! Incidentally, with regard to other proposed Safeguarded sites using the same access roads between Bank Lane and Dobb Lane Kirklees has commented that "the local highway network is considered to be unsuitable for the proposed intensification of use."

Local residents have written to the Council and the Police over the years about the dangerous 5 way junction. The only improvements on the road network have been the erection of 'Rural School Route' signs with flashing lights several years ago following concerns by parents and school staff. Due to the topography and historic road network there are no meaningful improvements that can be made. Regarding H626, the Council have attempted to address the road safety issue by stating 'Mitigation measures could include anti-skid road surfacing on Bankfield Drive and Laithe Bank Drive at the junction with Dobb Top Road'. Anti-skid road surfacing will not change the narrowness of Smithy Lane, improve the visibility splays or create safe footways. It will not reduce the gradients and therefore is unlikely to make a significant difference especially in icy and snowy conditions.

It is also relevant that almost all traffic from Holmbridge flows towards Holmfirth along the A6024 which is already locally known as the 'Rat Run' due to its lack of off road parking causing vehicles to double park. Any further development in Holmbridge will merely exacerbate its problems.

The level of concern about highway safety amongst local residents is clear and was highlighted in the recent Kirklees consultations on the Local Plan, with over 95% of the objections to the site commenting on

the existing dangers of the inadequate minor road network. These included objections from Holme Valley Parish Council, Holme Valley Vision, local M.P. and concerns expressed by Hinchcliffe Mill J & I School.

In order to make the plan sound, we respectfully request that site H626 be removed from the Local Plan.

Stephen Elvidge  
For and on behalf of Holmbridge Residents Group

**Photographs to support Hearing Statement-  
H626 Land to West of Bankfield Drive**



Photo 1 shows the road layout at the bottom of Bankfield Drive and Laithe Bank Drive. The high wall which blocks visibility when pulling out of Bankfield Drive is shown on the right under the Dobb Top Rd sign. Smithy Lane is only 4.7 metres wide wall to wall and traffic has to give way to single file.



Photo 2 shows the barriers protecting a hole in the wall on Dobb Top Road after a car slid down Laithe Bank Drive. The cones further up the road show the site of another incident. Taken from Google maps 2015.



Photo 3 Bankfield Drive



Photo 4

Photos 3 and 4 This is Bankfield Drive – a 20% gradient and quickly becomes unusable in ice or snow. Bankfield Drive meets Dobb Top Road, which has no pavements and there is no room to build them.



Photo 5 – the 1:6 gradient of Laithe Bank Drive and the complex junctions.



Photo 6 showing the junctions of Bankfield Drive, Smithy Lane and Dobb Top Road. Smithy Lane is to the right reaching into the distance. Where the car is on the photo is 4.7 metres wide wall to wall with room for only 1 vehicle to pass.



Photo 7 Taken 2.4metres from the Bankfield Drive junction and showing the wall which obstructs the view down Smithy Lane, second on left. There is a drop of approx. 30 metres beyond the wall shown along Dobb Top Road.



Photo 8 , parked cars restricting the width of Smithy Lane. There are often vehicles also parked on the left hand side of this road at the bottom of the hill.



Photo 9 Smithy Lane is a steep and narrow road with parked cars – only passable by 1 vehicle at a time. This is the route to Hinchliffe Mill School – note the Rural School Route sign. There are no footways and nowhere to build any.



Photo 10 above This is Bank Lane. Exit from site H626 is via Bankfield Drive, Smithy Lane and Bank Lane turning out onto the A6024 with very poor visibility. Again parked cars mean that only 1 vehicle can pass at a time. There are no footways and no room to build any.





Photo 11 above is Dobb Lane - This is the other approach to the site from Co-op Lane via Dobb Top Road is extremely narrow and twisty again with no footways