

**Netherton Park Residents' Association Statement (NPRA)**  
**Castle Morpeth Local Area Council – Item 20/02069/REM - 8th February 2021**

NPRA is fundamentally opposed to the development while substantive concerns regarding safety and access remain unresolved. These and other concerns, are understated in the Senior Planning Officer's report.

We firmly believe that better access arrangements are essential, and in the interests of everyone, including the applicant.

In August and 2 November 2020, the NPRA submitted detailed objections. While some regarding The Drive have been addressed, substantive access and safety issues have been dismissed by the Planning Officer on the basis that ***"the details of access to the site from the old A1 have already been approved through the granting of outline planning permission"***. We understand this is technically correct but respectfully suggest this should be revisited, to ensure proper due diligence has been undertaken in respect of safety and access. There is an opportunity here to intervene before a serious error is made.

**Context**

- 2014 NCC granted outline planning permission for a 5.5m access road and a 2m pathway. A letter on record from Fore Consulting stated that this met NCC and national policy standards, was appropriate to the scale of development, reasonable and did not compromise safe and free flow of traffic.
- 2019 A letter from Fore Consulting stated an alternate view that, for reasons that were not made explicit, a revised layout to a 4.8m access road and a 1.5m pathway (existing road layout) represented a safe and appropriate form of access for a development of this scale.
- The Highway Authority accepts this is sub-optimal and contrary to internal standards and national guidelines, but its ***opinion*** is that the ***shortcomings*** are justifiable.
- Approval of the revised arrangements was consequently taken under delegated powers.
- Part of the rationale stated ***it has now transpired that insufficient land was available to implement the original plans.***

**Questions this raises:**

- Why was such a major decision taken under delegated powers rather than full scrutiny by Committee?
- How did the applicant originally intend to widen the road?
- Why was 'insufficient land available' in 2019? Is this simply a cost issue?
- What efforts were made between 2014 and 2019 to secure additional land?
- If the 2014 proposal was appropriate, how can the compromise be appropriate now?

- Is this therefore a post-hoc decision made through necessity rather than reason, based on an error in 2014?
- Would the decision have been taken on this basis in 2014?

### **Other Issues**

- Our measurements suggest that the access road currently has a lower mean width (excluding the two passing places) between 4.6m and 4.7m and is 4.5m wide at its narrowest over a 200m length.
- The proposal was justified as appropriate to a development of 85 dwellings, but this ignores the traffic volume associated with existing residences, the commercial centre, Kyloe House, the Farm and Kennels at the east of the development and significant increases in delivery van traffic.
- The access road is actually narrower than the roads within the proposed development.
- Arrangements at the eastern end of the access road to facilitate traffic movement and safety at the area of the entrances to Kyloe House and The Drive involve a sharp bend, poor visibility (irrespective of proposed tree reduction) and are inadequate to safely cope with the likely volume of traffic at key times in that area.
- Safety issues remain with blind accesses from the exits from the business centre, 1-4 Farm Cottages and the lane 5-8 High Farm Cottages.
- Contrary to justification that *'there are no frontage accesses on the access road'*, 1 Netherton Farm Cottages (residential), and the Equestrian Centre exit directly onto the access road with limited visibility.
- Users currently travel at excessive speed along the access road.
- Cyclists and pedestrians (certain to increase in volume if the development goes ahead) have not been adequately considered.
- Arrangements for crossing at the Western end and accessing the Great North Road are vague.
- Speed restrictions and traffic calming measures are not factored into the proposal.

### **Implications**

- A sub-optimal (by NCC and national guidelines), dangerous road and pathway arrangement will exist.
- The safety of all users will be seriously compromised.
- Cyclists and pedestrians will be at particular risk, given anticipated growth in usage.

### **Finally**

We request that the Council defer the decision to allow the issues highlighted above and in our previous statements of objection to be revisited and investigated to ensure the safety of the community at Netherton Park.

**Chairman**  
Toby Raimes

**Treasurer/Acting Secretary**  
Jane Lambert