

MICKLEFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Ms Hannah Lucitt
Planning Services
Leeds City Council

City Development Directorate
Merrion House
110 Merrion Centre
Leeds
LS2 8BB

Ms Joanne Hebden
Clerk & RFO to the Council
Micklefield Parish Council

6 Churchville Avenue
Micklefield
Leeds
LS25 4AS

Date : 13th January 2020

PLANNING APPLICATION : 19/06800/FU/E

Applicant : Macauley Homes Ltd (Marcus Lee Parrish) of 107 Ackworth Road , Purston , Pontefract , Wakefield , West Yorkshire , WF7 5ND
C/O : Simon Brayshaw , Pop Architectural , 34 Park Lane , Allerton Bywater , Castleford , WF10 2AT

Location : Micklefield Motocross , Great North Road , Micklefield near Leeds , LS25 4ED .

Description : Full Planning Application for change of use of land from existing Motocross facility (*sui generis*) to Storage (B8) , including the siting of container units and installation of security lights and reception cabin .

Dear Ms Lucitt ,

At the ordinary meeting of Micklefield Parish Council held on Thursday 5th December 2019 , it was resolved that the Parish Council objects to this planning application and recommends that the application be refused . The Parish Council's considered view is based on the following issues :

Inappropriate Development in the Green Belt

The land proposed for redevelopment as a storage facility is a 6.4ha site in the Green Belt . This previously agricultural land is currently used as a Motocross facility , and has been used as such since at least 2006 . Enforcement against the " use of land for motor-cycle scrambling " was considered by the Local Planning Authority under case no. 06 / 01518 / UCU3 , but it was effectively concluded that there was no unauthorised " development " to exercise enforcement action against .

The ' jumps ' and ' dips ' had been created from imported inert waste materials and soil , rather than extensive excavations to reform the levels , and the 1.8m high fence was deemed to be permitted development in any case . The 7m high barn subsequently erected in the south east corner of the site was deemed to be permitted development for agricultural purposes , by virtue of application P/07/07116/DAG that was approved on 29th November 2007 .

It follows that the LPA had also concluded that the land was still ' open ' , that this purpose of the Green Belt had not been compromised by the use of the land for motor cycle scrambling , and that enforcement on that specific basis would not be reasonable , appropriate , or even necessary . Presumably , the view was also taken that if the land ceased to be used as a motocross facility at any point , it could easily be put back to agricultural use and that the " *sui generis* " use of the land in this way would not inevitably lead to a more ' developed ' use of the land being accepted , as if it was a natural progression .

The proposed use of the site for Storage (B8) would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt : inappropriate both in principle and in its practical effect . 60 storage containers would occupy just 864m² of the site , but the remainder of the 6.4ha site " is to be used for general storage (caravans , light commercial etc.) " .

This is an enormous area of land that would be eventually filled with caravans , vans , trucks and other light commercial vehicles . Even if the site surfacing were to remain as earth (which is doubtful) , the cluster of 15 high lighting columns and the sheer number of caravans and other vehicles filling the site create an urbanised character to the land and it would cease to be ' open ' . This purpose of the Green Belt would be significantly harmed , to the extent that the proposal is unacceptable and should be resisted .

No exceptional circumstances are offered by the applicant which might outweigh the undoubted harm to the Green Belt , forming the open land extending beyond the A1 (M) . The applicant suggests that " there has also been a lot of interest from the community in a storage use due to the increase in population in the area and an apparent lack of storage opportunities " . This is not an *exceptional* circumstance that can be legitimately used to justify using this Green Belt land for such a purpose .

There are no national or local planning policies or initiatives that would validate using Green Belt land to solve an *apparent* lack of storage opportunities in the Micklefield area . The Parish Council would also argue that using over 6ha of Green Belt land for general vehicle storage should only be proposed within a strategic planning framework , ie. as part of a Site Allocations Plan , with appropriate land removed from the Green Belt and proposed as a B8 allocation .

There is no embedded resource value in this site that needs to be retained (ie. not lost) for the applicant nor society as a whole . It is just an agricultural field that is being used as a motor-cycle scrambling area , and if the owner does not wish to continue facilitating the use of their Green Belt land as a motocross , then this does not justify the site becoming a commercial storage facility.

Unacceptable Harm to Archaeological Remains

There are the extensive remains of a large Romano - British farmstead under the application site . These were uncovered , examined and recorded during the construction of the A1 (M) in 2004 - 05 and were then covered by a large flat mound to protect the archaeological remains . The creation of the motocross facility did not affect those archaeological remains in any way and the use of the land for motor-cycle scrambling is actually an acceptable , non - intrusive activity above ground for ensuring that the archaeological remains are protected .

Depending on how any hard surfacing is installed across the site , the excavations might involve excavating into the original mound to create a level base . This might affect the archaeological remains , but the excavations to install 10 lighting columns across the whole site almost certainly will . The lighting columns , as proposed , would be 15m high and would require below - ground footings to a depth of at least 3m . On this basis , the excavations required for such tall lighting columns will be detrimental to the archaeological remains .

Has the West Yorkshire Archaeological Service been consulted on this planning application ? As at 12th January there was no consultation response from the WYAS on the City Council's Public Access page for this planning application , which gives some cause for concern . If , for whatever reason , the WYAS has not been consulted , then this needs to be rectified .

Potential Impact on Castle Hills Scheduled Monument and the Wildlife in Castle Hills and Highroyds Wood

The application site is immediately adjacent to a Scheduled Monument (Castle Hills) . The Castle Hills Scheduled Monument is not just Castle Hills itself , but also includes Highroyds Wood . Therefore the boundary of the Scheduled Monument extends along both the southern boundary *and* the eastern boundary of the application site , and the plethora of 15m high lighting columns might be detrimental to the setting of Castle Hills Scheduled Monument .

Has Historic England been consulted on this planning application ? Again , as at 12th January there was no consultation response from Historic England on the City Council's Public Access page for this planning application , which is extremely surprising and untoward . If , for whatever reason , Historic England has not been consulted , then surely this would need to be rectified .

Castle Hills is a plantation , but Highroyds Wood is a semi - ancient woodland , and both are habitats for a range of birds and other wildlife . Regardless of whether the applicant feels that the 15m high lighting columns will only direct light down onto the proposed storage site , has the City Council's Nature Team been consulted on this planning application ?

The amount of concentrated lighting proposed in this development (in open countryside adjacent to extensive woodland) might have a detrimental effect on birds and animals during the night, and it is important for this to be considered by officers with the technical expertise to make a proper assessment of what the effect might be .

Implications for the Safe and Convenient Use of the Public Footpath through the Application Site by Pedestrians

Vehicular movements to and from the Motocross facility are limited to specific periods on various Saturdays and / or Sundays through the year . The proposed Storage (B8) compound will be a commercial enterprise operating , presumably , on every day of the week throughout the year . It is important to note that the *carriageway* of the accommodation road leading to the application site from the Great North Road is also a Public Footpath , and the vehicular movements along this Public Footpath will be far more intensive for a Commercial Storage business than for the existing Motocross facility .

The accommodation road has no separate footway , so the regular vehicular movements every day , throughout the day , will have a direct effect on pedestrians walking along this stretch of Micklefield Public Footpath No.7 between the Great North Road and Castle Hills . It is difficult to see how the City Council's PROW team would support such an intensification of the vehicular use of a Public Footpath , although the Parish Council notes that , as at 12th January , there was no consultation response from the PROW team on the City Council's Public Access page for this planning application .

It is almost inconceivable that the PROW team has not been consulted on this planning application , although the Parish Council is aware of at least one planning application in Micklefield where the PROW team was *not* consulted , even though the application was for a large housing development and two Public Footpaths run through that application site . The Parish Council trusts that the PROW team has been consulted on this planning application and that its consultation response is on the cusp of being received and / or uploaded to the Public Access page .

Yours sincerely ,

Joanne Hebden (Clerk & RFO to the Parish Council)