

Thornton Parish Council Objections To Proposed Development At The Ramblers

Thornton Parish Council hereby object to the two planning applications proposing the building of 6 properties at the Ramblers Football Club on Moor Lane, and the associated proposal to turn the disused tennis courts into a car park. (Planning references DC/2019/02088 & DC/2020/00423.) Our objection is based on the following considerations:

- Exacerbation of existing heavy congestion and traffic flow issues, to the detriment of local residents and all road users on Moor Lane, along with the additional impact on road safety, with a new junction being added for the proposed access road in very close proximity to an existing pedestrian crossing and bus stop.
- The resulting increase in air pollution around Moor Lane, initially from the construction traffic, then from the additional cars in the area after completion along with the worsening of existing traffic flow issues which the new junction will create, mentioned above. This is in an area which is already heavily congested and has not had adequate monitoring of air pollution, and where air pollution very likely exceeds the safe levels set out in national and EU legislation. (Despite air quality being the chosen theme of Sefton's 2019 Public Health Annual Report!) This development will only make the issue even worse.
- Increase in the known localised flooding risks in Thornton due to the paving of green space and lack of improvement to already inadequate drainage systems. This is a risk which will only increase as time goes on due to the increasing frequency of extreme weather events caused by accelerating climate change.
- The loss of more of our vital green space which would result from the development, along with the associated loss of habitat for wildlife and the exacerbation of other issues mentioned above, namely air pollution and flood risks.
- Loss of the longstanding, de facto right of access to the land in question which, due to it being the only open and accessible green space in the surrounding area, would be detrimental for local residents, in particular dog walkers. It also seems strange that a reduction in cited antisocial behaviour is given as one of the 'positives' for the proposed housing development, when for decades no attempt appears to have been made to secure the site in any way.
- The proposed housing development is planned to be a gated community with resident only access, which would be out of keeping with, and detrimental to, the character of the area, and would undermine the cohesiveness of the community by segregating off the new houses in an exclusive area. Any purported benefit of this to the small number of residents in the new development would be offset by lowering the quality of life of other local residents, putting them more at risk of for example antisocial behaviour, changing the character of the area and undermining the community as a whole.

In addition to the reasons outlined above, a restrictive covenant was placed on the proposed development site at the time of its purchase from Sefton MBC by the Ramblers Football Club, which stipulated that the land must be kept as open land for sports use. While it is documented from November 2018 that Sefton MBC, as the beneficiary of the covenant, were intending to relax it in return for a fee from the Ramblers, it is unclear whether this has actually taken place, and whether it would remove the covenant from the whole site, or just the section currently proposed for housing. Some clarification on any alterations which have been made, and the nature and scope of the restrictions now in place would be welcomed, if only to allay the fears of many residents that this could be the first step of a larger future development.

Thornton Parish Council.