



**In general we are in agreement that the use of the Highfields site as a care home is good use and of benefit to the town. We do however have two specific objections that we believe should be addressed before planning is approved:**

### **1. Concerns Regarding Traffic Speed and Safety**

This objection addresses the inadequacy of the traffic assessment provided for the proposed development at Highfields, West Hill, and raises serious concerns about the potential impact of increased traffic and speeds on the safety of pedestrians and other road users. While the Highways Authority may have deemed the access arrangements acceptable, the analysis is insufficient to address local concerns, particularly regarding the existing high speeds on West Hill and the increased frequency of traffic the new development will bring.

**Inadequate Consideration of Existing Conditions:** The provided documents, including the Transport Statement and Road Safety Audit, present a limited view of existing traffic conditions on West Hill. While they acknowledge the 30mph speed limit and the presence of parking restrictions, they **fail to fully address the reality of existing traffic speeds and the frequency of vehicles currently using West Hill**. The Road Safety Audit notes that "Traffic flows were low, with a low number of pedestrians and cyclists observed traveling along West Hill," but this does not reflect the lived experience of local residents, who are concerned about high speeds on the road. The Transport Statement reviews Personal Injury Accident (PIA) data and concludes that there are no specific safety issues, but this is **not sufficient to dismiss resident concerns about traffic speed and the potential for increased accidents** due to the increased volume of traffic this development will introduce.

**Underestimation of Traffic Increase:** The Transport Statement suggests a minimal increase in traffic, stating a net change of 10 two-way vehicle movements in the AM peak and 9 in the PM peak. However, the report also notes a potential total of 166 two-way vehicle movements over a 12-hour period. **This significant increase, even if spread throughout the day, will contribute to congestion and will increase the risk of accidents**, and it is unacceptable to conclude that such an increase is "minimal" without a thorough analysis of its impact on existing conditions.

The statement that this is an average of just "one vehicle movement every 6 minutes" does not consider that there may be periods of higher traffic volume than others and does not take into account the type of vehicle using the road, or the number of pedestrians and cyclists at different times of day.

**Lack of Speed Assessment:** Crucially, **there is no specific speed assessment provided for West Hill in any of the documents**. The lack of any independent speed survey to assess actual vehicle speeds along West Hill, especially around the proposed access point, is a **major omission**. The application relies on the fact that West Hill is subject to a 30mph speed limit, but **does not assess whether that speed limit is**

**being observed.** The absence of this data means that the impact of increased traffic cannot be accurately assessed, and it cannot be concluded that there is no risk.

**Inadequate Consideration of Pedestrian Safety:** The Road Safety Audit identifies a potential risk of pedestrian collisions, but the response is to direct pedestrians to an existing access point, rather than consider whether pedestrians will be safe using the proposed new vehicle access from West Hill. **The plans fail to address the safety of pedestrians in the context of increased traffic and existing high speeds for those crossing West Hill to/from West Lane.** The increased traffic and potential for higher speeds, combined with the increased number of pedestrians and cyclists generated by the development, has not been adequately addressed.

**Need for Traffic Calming Measures:** Given the existing issues with vehicle speed, and the likelihood of increased traffic with the proposed development, the application should include proposals for **implementing appropriate traffic calming measures** on West Hill. These measures may include:

Speed bumps or cushions.

A speed activated sign.

A pedestrian crossing (zebra crossing or pelican crossing).

Reduced speed limits to below 30mph, where considered appropriate.

**Insufficient Road Safety Audit:** While a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit was undertaken, it does not fully address the concerns about speed and the impact of increased traffic.

The audit identified a number of potential issues, including the risk of pedestrian collisions and the potential for large vehicles overrunning the opposing traffic lane, but **these issues have not been adequately addressed by the proposed mitigations.**

The response to the audit focuses on "overrunning the centre line of the carriageway is considered appropriate and safe," rather than addressing the underlying issues of the road being too narrow and too fast. The measures taken should be about risk reduction, not just about meeting the minimum legal requirements.

### **Recommendations:**

To ensure the safety of all road users and residents, it is essential that:

A **thorough, independent speed assessment** of West Hill is conducted, particularly in the vicinity of the proposed development and the access to / from West Lane.

The Transport Statement is **revised to incorporate a realistic assessment** of the increased traffic, and an analysis of the impact of this increased traffic volume on pedestrian safety.

The developers propose **concrete and specific traffic calming measures** to mitigate the risk of accidents resulting from increased traffic and existing high speeds on West Hill.

The application should be **amended to include a specific plan to protect pedestrians** from increased traffic and from increased vehicle speeds.

The local planning authority should require the developers to **fully engage with local residents** and the local Highways Authority to develop an appropriate traffic management plan for the area.

The current application lacks a realistic appraisal of the traffic conditions on West Hill. Without a speed assessment, and without appropriate traffic calming measures, this development is

**unacceptable and places residents, pedestrians and other road users at increased risk.**

The application must be amended to address these crucial safety concerns.

## **2. Boundary Fence Responsibility and Patient Safety**

This objection is raised regarding the developer's position that they are not responsible for the boundary fence between the Highfields site and the adjoining properties. In our case specifically, "Hillcrest". The sources indicate a maintenance plan for boundaries within the development, but also state that "adjoining properties are outside the applicant's control." This position is unacceptable for the following reasons:

**Historical Responsibility:** We have a **firm understanding, based on historical interactions** with previous owners of Highfields, that they are responsible for the boundary fence between our properties. This understanding has been consistent and has formed the basis of our property relationship. The developer's current stance, which attempts to absolve them of this responsibility, **contradicts prior agreements and established precedent.**

**Discrepancy with Existing Situation:** The statement that adjoining properties are outside the applicant's control implies that they have no responsibility for existing boundaries, irrespective of prior arrangements. This ignores the existing established situation where the owners of Highfields have previously maintained the boundary with Hillcrest, and any **transfer of ownership or development should respect pre-existing agreements** concerning the boundary responsibility.

**Maintenance Plan Focus:** The developer's focus on their internal boundary maintenance plan is noted, but this is not sufficient to address the specific situation of responsibility for pre-existing boundaries that are not clearly inside the new development footprint. The maintenance plan in the sources appears to cover new fencing installed for the development but does not address the maintenance of existing fences.

**"Private Garden Fence" Misinterpretation:** The inclusion of "Private Garden Fence" on the landscape plan key does not relate to existing perimeter fencing. It refers to fencing within the proposed development, specifically for the new private gardens within the care home, and not the pre-existing fence between neighbours and the Highfields site.

**Lack of Due Diligence:** The application appears to have been prepared **without consideration of existing boundary agreements and responsibilities** between adjoining properties, which are material in establishing the development's impact. There is an assumption in the application that boundaries do not require detailed consideration unless they are within the new development footprint, and that no previous agreements or responsibilities exist.

**Risk to Vulnerable Residents:** Some of the proposed development is for a dementia care facility, which by its nature, requires specific considerations for the safety and well-being of its residents. **The absence of a commitment to maintain secure boundary fencing creates a significant risk of residents with dementia wandering into neighbouring properties**, including "Hillcrest." This not only poses a potential danger to the residents themselves but also introduces an unacceptable level of

intrusion into neighbouring gardens. The planning documents do reference the need to provide a safe and secure garden area for those with limited mobility, and the need for a secure perimeter, but do not discuss boundaries with neighbours, or the risk of patients leaving the premises.

As this development is primarily intended as a dementia care home it fails to address the issue of whether residents can access the exterior perimeter of the site, or the nature of the boundary treatment to keep residents within the site.

The "Design and Access Statement" indicates that the scheme is "designed to ensure that the future viability of the home is secure and that it is able to meet the increasing demanding needs of its future residents.". A secure perimeter is a key consideration for the needs of residents in a dementia care home.

**Safety Concerns:** The current plans **fail to adequately address the need for robust and secure fencing** to protect both the residents of the care home and the amenity of neighbouring properties. The risk of unsupervised access to neighbouring gardens is not only a safeguarding issue for vulnerable residents, but also a security issue for neighbouring properties.

### **Recommendations:**

To address these issues, it is essential that:

The developers must **explicitly acknowledge the historical responsibility of Highfields for the boundary fence with Hillcrest**. They must provide a **legally binding written agreement** to continue the maintenance and upkeep of the fence, ensuring that it is robust, secure, and fit for purpose to prevent residents from wandering into neighboring properties. The written agreement must also include details of the materials to be used to ensure it is fit for purpose.

The local planning authority should **require the applicant to provide evidence of clear title and ownership for the boundary**, including any historical documentation from previous owners that clarify boundary responsibility.

The application should be **amended to include a detailed assessment of existing boundary agreements and responsibilities**, especially those concerning "Hillcrest", and to reflect any formal or informal agreements between previous owners, where applicable. This assessment should also explicitly address the need for secure boundaries to protect the residents.

The developer should **engage in direct consultation with the owners of "Hillcrest"** to resolve these concerns and provide written confirmation of who will be responsible for the maintenance, repair, and replacement of the boundary fence. This must also address the need for a secure boundary to prevent residents wandering offsite, and to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

A plan for the **type of boundary fencing to be used must be made available** to all nearby neighbours, including those properties that are not immediately adjacent to the site.

The current stance that adjoining properties are outside the applicant's control is **not sufficient to abrogate responsibility for pre-existing boundary agreements, nor for ensuring patient safety and safeguarding**. The plans should be revised to acknowledge the existing situation, protect the rights and expectations of the owners of neighbouring properties, and address the need for secure boundaries to ensure the safety of vulnerable residents of the care home.

