



Open Letter by email to:

Cllr Carl Les (Leader of North Yorkshire Council),
Cllr Mark Crane (Executive Member for Open to Business [including Planning]),
Cllr Malcolm Taylor (Executive Member for highways and Transportation),
Mr Richard Flinton (Chief Executive of North Yorkshire Council),
Mr Nic Harne (Corporate Director of Community Development, North Yorkshire
Council)

Dear Sirs,

We, the members of Sherburn in Elmet Town Council, are writing this open letter in strong opposition to the current planning procedure at North Yorkshire Council. Our experience engaging with planning applications at North Yorkshire Council over the past year has been nothing short of appalling. We also wish to highlight that we have tried to raise our concerns with you through private correspondence, however, the attempts at resolution have been poor at best. Hence, we feel that there is no further option available to us than to write this open letter, and refer our complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The frontispiece of the [Selby Core Strategy](#) notes that Sherburn in Elmet experienced a “relatively high level of housing development” between 2000 and 2010, where a total of 291 new homes were built. In the same document, it states that across the 2011-2027 period, Sherburn in Elmet needed to provide at least 790 homes. As of the time of writing (November 2025), Sherburn has provided 1,311 homes, with appeal approval for an additional 106 homes bringing the total to 1,417 delivered in 15 years. This is unsustainable for a number of reasons.

Since 2011, our population has grown from 6,657 to approaching 10,000. We have met our requirement for housing and exceeded it by 66%. In turn, we have experienced a population growth of almost 40%. Our level of growth is far beyond what any other parish in the former Selby District has experienced, and what the people of our parish could have reasonably expected 15 years ago.

We as a parish also house the largest industrial estate in North Yorkshire. An industrial estate that employs over 10,000 people per day. An industrial estate that has experienced enormous growth in the previous 15 years. All the whilst without the highway improvements that were promised, and yet still remain undelivered.

In that time, we have seen lip service paid to our infrastructure. We have repeatedly raised issues about the fragility of our road network, which is exacerbated by growth without strategy. Just last year we saw a single highways incident bring large parts of Sherburn and the surrounding area to a standstill. There has been no obvious strategic approach, or even a recognition of the issues that Sherburn in Elmet faces.

Our schools do not have the capacity to take on more children, with some already being sent elsewhere. Our local GP surgery does not have the staffing capacity to take on more patients, or the ancillary infrastructure to accommodate those it already has. Our community has no NHS dentist appointments available within it. Our closest household waste recycling centre and fire station are in Tadcaster. We are the second largest parish in the former Selby District. We are one of the 15 largest parishes in North Yorkshire. Yet we do not have a fit-for-purpose indoor Sports and Leisure facility that can facilitate health and wellbeing services for our parish's population, and the neighbouring parishes we support.

When it comes to the matter of planning development, we recognise that the national policy has changed. But the decision to abandon the Emerging Selby Local Plan at its final stage was and continues to be ludicrous. It has left the whole district in a state of limbo when it comes to planning applications. Ultimately, it is residents who bear the cost of it. Not North Yorkshire Council.

As a Town Council we are not against development. We recognise the pressures nationally and the need for housing, but the current free-for-all for developers with little to no recognition and plans to address local issues by North Yorkshire is catastrophic. The current system, which North Yorkshire Council has exacerbated by their decision to cease the emerging Selby Local Plan, is weighted too favourably towards the developers. Meaning that genuine local issues, not NIMBYisms, are being swept by the wayside. Even if planning applications are rejected at the Planning Committee, the current void of policy not only invites appeal, but borders on prejudicial favour for overturning rejections.

In our most recent experience, consulting Town and Parish Councils has not felt like an exercise in ensuring local and democratic representation but simply a box-ticking exercise. Genuine and real concerns around highways safety, the potential for overdevelopment, and severe lack of infrastructure investment are seemingly being dismissed and set aside so that officers can meet their five-year housing land supply quota.

We, as representatives of the people of Sherburn in Elmet, have witnessed, first-hand, planning officers wilfully and egregiously trying to overturn decisions by local councillors to refuse planning permissions, to the point where officers have said in public meetings that “this will be difficult to defend at appeal” and that Councillors should “remember their training”, the latter of which absolutely came across as dismissive of Councillors’ views and the credibility of their decision-making. It is outrageous that planning officers seek to dismiss genuine concerns over how development is delivered, in favour of what many would see as commercial interests.

In the case of 106 houses to be built off Rochester Row and Bartlett View, we as a Town Council experienced the absolute worst of the planning process from start to finish. We were excluded from the site visit by North Yorkshire planning officers, contrary to North Yorkshire Council policy. We read a planning report which contained what we believe to be material omissions, and a complete disregard for any potential reasons for refusal. The planning report was not an objective view of the potential development, and it is not surprising that some feel that it read like a long-form campaigning leaflet which overwhelmingly favoured one outcome, with no regard for any negative outcomes of the scheme.

The constant back and forth by Highways officers over whether access roads were suitable can only be described as an unobjective assessment. In the eyes of the public, it could appear as though the independence of Highways officials was compromised, so as to ensure planning permission was granted. Further to this, to witness the principal planning officer leave the meeting to talk to the applicants, after permission was refused, is extremely damaging to the public perception of the planning process’ credibility. It undermines North Yorkshire Council’s position as a neutral arbitrator of planning decisions, and leaves residents to think and allege the worst.

Even though this application was refused at the Planning Committee, despite the officer's recommendation, the conduct of North Yorkshire Council in preparing and delivering the case at appeal was a fundamental act of betrayal of our residents. Our residents pay their taxes to North Yorkshire for you to represent their interests. Fighting this appeal was in our residents' interests. North Yorkshire seemed to choose not to, as was noted by the appellants. If the Council felt unsure about how to approach the appeal, what efforts were made to clarify the conditions 'on the ground' and ensure that local issues could be adequately addressed and the best possible case put forward? As a Town Council and local residents, we would have put in place everything required to support NYC in preparing its case, but no such request was made. Instead, it was left to members of our Town Council and local residents to fight the case on your behalf on the day at the Appeal Hearing.

For a case that was refused on road access being unsuitable, to not bring a highways expert was extremely damaging to the case for refusal. To not bring your own barrister, or even someone from your legal department, was contemptuous. North Yorkshire Council did not seem to even have prepared to defend the reasons for refusal. From the outside it seems a simple case of either incompetence or wilful negligence.

Sadly, we now know that all of the above did indeed have a direct impact on the developer's appeal being successful in this case. To quote the [Appeal Costs Decision Document](#): "[North Yorkshire Council] has not substantiated its reasons for refusal. The Hearing Statement and oral evidence has done nothing to fill the gaps The claim that they have expanded on [their case] is misconceived."

In the case of the 66 houses to be built off Garden Lane, our faith in your planning processes was truly broken. Again, this application was refused by North Yorkshire Councillors at the Planning Committee, despite your officer's campaign document recommending approval. This case again went to appeal, and again you let your residents down. To find out that North Yorkshire Council had conceded the three reasons for rejection the week before the appeal inquiry date was abhorrent. You did this behind closed doors, and without public scrutiny of the decision (which included what we consider to be material changes to the proposals). It was unaccountable, it was undemocratic, it betrayed what little confidence we and our residents have left in the planning process. And, when claims from the appellant

for the reimbursement of appeal costs are dropped swiftly afterwards, it is understandable why local people might connect the dots or jump to conclusions about whose interests are really being served.

Like the case of Rochester Row and Bartlett View mentioned before, due to the capitulation on the reasons for refusal, it was left to the Town Council to provide reasoned evidence to uphold the refusal. Whilst you did at least bring legal representation and a highways expert, the process seemed to be a formality in favour of overturning the original decision to refuse.

We are left in a state where we believe that the appeal for 66 houses on Garden Lane will be overturned, like with the 106 houses off Rochester Row and Bartlett View. We stand by local residents who believe that this will permit unsafe and piecemeal development of Sherburn. We believe that it is the wilful actions of North Yorkshire Council that have compromised both cases for refusal, and are to the detriment of safety in our town.

We know that this is not the end for potential development in Sherburn in Elmet; in fact, we are aware of four schemes that total a potential 950 homes in Sherburn in Elmet alone. This is on top of significant industrial schemes proposed, and the potential for 'infill' residential schemes. If there is not an urgent review of development land allocation (and not one as far away as 2029 when the North Yorkshire Local Plan may be adopted), this will only get worse.

This potential for 950 homes, on top of the 106 overturned at appeal, and the 66 currently in the appeal process, leads to a potential of 1,122 new homes in Sherburn in Elmet. This would be on top of an already delivered 1,311 homes. Meaning that in the 20 years since the Core Strategy was adopted. Sherburn in Elmet would have delivered 2,433 new homes. That projection is the equivalent of two South Milfords in 20 years, and it would represent a 308% delivery on what was required of us. This is surely the definition of overdevelopment.

We are left at a point where we do not have confidence in North Yorkshire Council to represent the people and their interests effectively in regards to planning matters. We also do not have confidence that North Yorkshire Council have a sufficient plan for proactive infrastructure investment, one that will actually help meet the needs of communities like ours both now and in the future.

To make it clear, we have heard first hand that residents feel they have been betrayed when it comes to planning matters across the former Selby District. The current planning policy overwhelmingly favours developers even where there are legitimate concerns locally, and North Yorkshire Council are an accessory in this process. If this is the legitimate process for planning applications to be dealt with, by disregarding constructive dissent, making concessions in private, and conceding points for refusal without scrutiny, then the process is unjust.

We strongly urge North Yorkshire Council to do two things:

- 1) Urgently bring forward a strategic allocation of land across the Selby District to satisfy their five-year housing land supply shortfall, in order to stop ad-hoc, piecemeal developments.
- 2) To review infrastructure capacity in Sherburn in Elmet, and prepare a plan for proactive infrastructure investment, in collaboration with the Town Council.

On behalf of,

Sherburn in Elmet Town Council

Signed by:

Peter Baumann

Cllr Peter Baumann, Chair

Alex Tant-Brown

Cllr Alex Tant-Brown, Vice-Chair

David Buckle

Cllr David Buckle

Heather Coates

Cllr Heather Coates

Nicholas Commandeur

Cllr Nicholas Commandeur

Dennis Hodgson

Cllr Dennis Hodgson

John Irvin

Cllr John Irvin

Mike Jordan

Cllr Mike Jordan

Sophie Kaiper-Holmes

Cllr Sophie Kaiper-Holmes

Gary Limbert

Cllr Gary Limbert

Ken Taylor

Cllr Ken Taylor