

Consultation Response: Kirklees Council Environment Unit

2012/92106 Denby Lane, Upper Denby

Rationale: to ensure compliance with the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and, compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Underground dwellings are, if correctly designed, thermally efficient and we approve of the principle of this development in terms of building sustainability.

Existing Buildings and Site

The existing buildings on site appear unlikely to have any significant bat roost potential. Even so, a cautionary note should be added that if bats are found during the development then work must cease immediately and the advice of a licensed bat worker sought.

The wider field area within the red line appears agriculturally improved. In addition, the site is adjacent to Denby Delf SSI/Local Wildlife Site to the east and Square Wood to the north. In addition, WY Ecology have noted (when undertaking a condition assessment of the SSI) that the fields to the east and south east (located to the north and south of the defunct quarry) have been seeded as wildflower-rich grasslands in the past. Consequently, in line with section 118 of the NPPF there are considerable opportunities for improving the biodiversity value of the site.

Proposed Landscaping

The plans propose a considerable amount of woodland creation on areas that currently are grazed. Whilst we are supportive of woodland planting in principle, for this site the woodland should be carefully designed to not be detrimental to (and preferably enhance) the more open habitats of Denby Delf SSI (in line with policy NE3) and woodland to the north. At present, it is only stated that the new woodland will be planted to 'Forestry Commission standard'. This is insufficient for the purposes of determining the application.

Further detail is required, including:

- A Phase 1 habitat assessment of the habitats currently present on site (ie the value of the grassland)
- The type of woodland proposed. As this is being presented as a biodiversity enhancement, the woodland should be made up of a diverse range of native species that are appropriate to the area. This should be detailed.
- Density of woodland planting should be adjusted to provide lower density woodland/woodland edge/wood pasture for the area adjoining Denby Delf. The proposals should complement and enhance the habitats currently present at Denby Delf.
- The woodland should be designed to be naturalistic, avoiding straight and abrupt edges.
- An area is identified on the plan as designated for Badger Setts and 'Rabbit Warrens'. We would not recommend deliberately creating rabbit warrens given the problems this species can cause.

John Atkinson
Environment Unit

Date: 03/08/2012