The impact on the ancient woodland and the beck – re the proposal to build 50 homes in Stocksmoor

The Environmental impact assessment has confined its consideration to ONLY the proposed site (the field) rather than the swathes of rare and precious ancient woodland that surround the site and the beck that flows through it. It cannot be looked at in a bubble. The EIA is dismissive, as to the value the field has to the very special swathes of ancient woodland and unique beck that it exists symbiotically with. It is written by an author that is paid by a developer who's agenda is to make money, not to protect the environment. She author states:

The report is with :*'with reasonable skill, care and diligence, and taking account of the timescales and resources devoted to it by agreement with Newett Homes Limited (the Client) as part or all of the services it has been appointed by the Client to carry out. It is subject to the terms and conditions of that appointment.*

This is a report where research commenced some 2 years previous.
It is also dated the 24th of April, so it is unclear why it was not initially submitted.

The ancient woodland and stream are home to a range of seasonable flora, fauna and animals and creatures. The life in the wood's changes with the seasons and the light levels. On night walks the woods come alive with a very different array of creatures. None of this diversity has been portrayed in the environmental assessment served on the public on the 26th June 2024. The woods are in the Spring an area where bird song reverberates from tree to tree. The flowers in the spring are magnificent, starting with the stream being majestically framed with the wood anemone and then them giving away to bluebells and then the pungent wild garlic. In the Autumn the woods are home to a range of fungi, the red capped always makes a show along with rarer types such as strobilomyces floccopus (shown below) There are only two sites in Kirklees that have this fungi and it is of principal importance. The report makes no account of the seasonable variation of the life that lives around and it and is impacted by the proposal. The report suggests that the dust, possible blasting, and obvious pollution will not have any impact, but of course it will. And should we be even thinking of taking such risks?

The level of disturbance will be absolutely and fundamentally devastating to the environment. The attenuation tank is 41mx10mx2m with a capacity of 827 cubic metres. It will have to sit on very substantial foundations. The stage 1 geotechnical report indicates bedrock may up to 2M below ground level. The area where this is sited is on a slope and immediately adjacent the 15m buffer zone indicated on the landscape plan.
I have also noticed that at this point the railway track sits only metres away. It appears to disappear around the railway track and then the water cascades down the hill into the beck that then goes under the railway bridge and on through Hartley wood into Thunderbridge.

Given the amount of water and the gravity, I am not convinced that the pumping of wastewater will cope with the physics of the geography of the area and the requirements of circa 400 people using toilets and washing. Who will be responsible for the maintenance of the tank, pump and pipes that go with this system? How does the council ensure that they maintain the responsibility for perpetuity. There is already a huge problem with sewage in Thunderbridge that has been underlined by other objectors. The report by Mosely does not consider the wider flood risk that can be witnessed regularly by the geysers that spout of the manholes on Dam lane. There will be no amount of care that will prevent the ecosystem in the beck being compromised. What involvement has network rail had and the environment agency? It is very topical the pollution levels in the UK's water ways, if this development is allowed it places further risk.

Yorkshire water have stated:

If *sewage pumping is required, the peak pumped foul water discharge must not exceed 4.75 (four point seven five) litres per second. 2. The developer is proposing to discharge surface water to watercourse and SUDS. Yorkshire Water promote the surface water disposal hierarchy and the developer must provide evidence to demonstrate that surface water disposal via infiltration or watercourse are not reasonably practical before considering disposal to public sewer. It is understood that Stone Wood Dike is located to the east of the site. This appears to be the obvious place for surface water disposal. The developer should note that further restrictions on surface water disposal from the site may be imposed by other parties. The developer is strongly advised to seek advice/comments from the Environment Agency/Land Drainage Authority/Internal Drainage Board with regard to surface water disposal from the site. The landowners consent will be required for the construction.*

There is no report from the environment agency. Are the amount of discharge feasible given the amount of potential residents?

Those instructed also appear to identify problems(They again accept no liability)

PUBLIC SEWERS 8.8.1 As a last resort and following the hierarchy of surface water, disposal discharge to the public sewer system may need to be considered. 8.8.2 The Yorkshire Water pre development enquiry shown in Appendix E indicated that the site is previously undeveloped and no surface water is known to have previously discharged to the public sewer network, and that the local public sewer network does not have capacity to accept any surface water from the proposed site. 8.9 PROPOSED DISCHARGE RATES 8.9.1 Discharge via infiltration is required to be explored further before it can be ruled out. However, surface water can discharge into the Stone Wood Dyke to the east of the site. As surface water will be discharged into a watercourse, surface water will be restricted to greenfield runoff,

This does not give any reassurances with regards to the preservation of the beck.

To excavate this site, and to achieve the desired levels elsewhere on site, they will have to shift and move a lot of soil. The site being an ecosystem in its own right. Not to mention the possible blasting on the site. This is going to lead to months of intensive ground works, and disposition of very large spoil heaps on and around the site. This will be done by diggers. The disruption both noise, visual and impact on biodiversity will be substantial. They will absolutely trash the whole site - it will look apocalyptic. There is some visual imagery at Fenay Bridge where the same developer is building. The debris will have to go somewhere and will impact on the sensitive creatures that hunt on the wood, the ecosystem in the beck will be wiped out and chemical changes impact on the flora, fauna in the ancient woodland and beyond. The EIA fails to address this in any detail and makes no mention of aquatic organisms, flowers, or fauna.T
What about the impact on the introduced predators that come with humans, ie. Cats and dogs. Given the proximity to the woods this should have been considered and again has not been touched upon in the report. The EIA gives no account of this.

Given the unique nature of the beck floor ,that the head of planning has referred to, how is anyone going to guard against damaging this? A section of the wood is called ‘stones wood’ because of its unique geological surface which looks in place akin to the effect of the giant causeway with drops and steps within the stream bed. With the risk of pollutants and additional strain the sensitive geology will also be compromised.

In the Ecological report it recommends that there should be a Ecological COW (Clerk of works) and that the ground works will be done in a manner that allows wildlife to migrate. This is very unlikely to happen in reality they’ll just crack on and do what needs to be done. As time will be money. This element of the job will be subcontracted (all the different operations will be subcontracted - with Newett acting as principal contractor) and the contractor will have an envelope of time based

on his highly competitive tender to get it done, they will not faff around waiting for a ladybird to crawl out of the way as the ecological report suggests they should. Indeed, who would be responsible for ensuring that the contractors do ensure the safety of the creatures that live on the field, woods and beck and do we truly believe that this is possible?

The surveys were done in winter, December 2022 and February 2024 with many areas where there was an inability to study, there was no further study at the key months. It is unclear why. The report is not based on an informed and detailed study of the area, it also fails to take any responsibility.

It is also largely a desk top exercise, hence why the author has missed so much key information. There is no reference to many of the larger mammals that have been seen in the fields, wood and beck, we have regular sightings of the deer drinking from the beck and grazing on the field, the badgers who have a healthy population in the area and hares. There is no mention of frogs that live in the stream. There is no detail re fauna and flower e.g. the wood anemones, wild orchids along the grass , wild garlic etc.

The report does not seem to pick up on the seasonality of the water levels in Stoney Brook Dyke. In the winter months it can swell across the roads and be waist level. The woods can be impassable with additional waterfalls and streams. Again I am not confident that the suggestions that Martin Stephenson (Kirklees – a report on the drainage and water courses) will work and they do not read with any confidence:

In addition, the LLFA considers infiltration into the underlying soil as not being feasible due to the steeply sloping ground to the east of the development and the risk of re-emergence of flows that could de-stabilise the slope. Therefore, the LLFA accepts the proposal to discharge attenuated surface water flows to a local unnamed watercourse to the east of the site (a tributary of Stone Wood Dike) as shown on the plan in Appendix B of the FRA

Again more strain on the beck and no consideration on the EIA on the consequences,

By way of context the slope is the railway line and the unnamed waters course enters the beck at a natural water fall that then flows under the railway.

The impact on the beck and watercourses have been significantly downplayed. In the environmental impact assessment, the author has alluded to the potential impact on the stream, she has suggested initially that it can be limited:

'It should be noted that impacts to/the loss of river/stream habitat can be difficult to compensate for within development proposals, with the extent of grassland loss likely to be required by development also having the potential to require additional compensation, above that possible within the scope of the landscaping scheme.'

It is unclear how one can compensate for a precious, natural habitat. This does not equate to a few bat boxes, a couple of trees and a playground. It is disingenuous and miscalculated to suggest there can be any compensation that equates.

The proposal is to deal with the environmental damage by way of a gap between the woods and the development, otherwise known as a buffer. The buffer is compromised by the sighting of the attenuation tank which is the size of a space ship and very close to the water course. There are varying suggestions re the buffer's distance. However, the amount of ancient woodland should dictate the size of the buffer. Given the size of the woodland the buffer would have to be significant

to have any impact and even with a buffer it will not stop the impact of the noise, pollutants and light pollution that will impact on the ecology of the woods and stream.

It is counter intuitive to a sustainable development.
The Kirklees plan directs against such developments:

LP30 Kirklees Plan:
Proposals having a direct or indirect effect on a local wildlife site or on a local gelogoval site, ancient woodland , veteran tree will not be permitted unless the benefits of the development can be clearly shown to outweigh the need to safeguard the local conservation value of the site or feauture and there is NO alternative means to deliver the proposal.

A. Especially before all brownfield sites across the whole borough not just Kirkburton ward have been exhausted.
B. This site should never have been designated as safeguarded and should be subject to proper review which LP2 should afford.
C. Drainage problems should be investigated across whole system from the site and Stocksmoor down to Thunderbridge. Both for Foul and Surface water.

This area has to be protected in perpetuity, if it is allowed to happen the clock cannot be turned back.


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