

TREES – The design removes the only significant trees within the red line – the ash trees obliterated by the new access. These are described in the Ecology report as ‘semi-mature’ and are already important in the view up Leak Hall Lane, used by many to access Wither Wood and wider countryside via Dark Lane, and PROW to Cumberworth Lane. It is no substitute to offer new tree planting. On the recent development of 5 houses at top of Leak Hall Road only 2 small cherry trees remain from all those originally planted, indeed some occupiers have paved over the entire frontage, removing trees planted as part of planning approval. A new tree is no substitute for an established tree, either in the streetscape visually or for wildlife. Ash is a good choice near to housing, as it has small leaflets which appear late. The Tree Officer comments seem to assume that the generous scattering of green circles on the plan indicate a commitment to plant that number of trees in the development. This is not a matter included at this stage in this application – and is naïve in the extreme! Even if this were delivered at handover, the occupiers could remove these trees & introduce fake grass, decking, hard landscaping etc to fill the whole plot – as shown in recent developments elsewhere in the village. Indeed, the Ecological/Biodiversity Statement submitted states under ‘Mitigation’ for habitat loss: “ Please note, tree planting in private gardens cannot be accounted for in the metric as the long-term retention of such features cannot be guaranteed in the long term.”

ECOLOGY – note that this land was fenced off by applicant who has made no effort to allow grazing, so it has become scrub.

The Bat survey only aimed to establish if bats were using the outbuilding on the single date in question, after a slow start to summer. No discussion considered of potential of this building as a winter roost site. No interest in where the 3 species of bats which were observed, or the 5 species mentioned in the Ecological report around the site are coming from or feeding. The importance of connected habitats as identified in the Kirklees Wildlife Habitat status of the land is ignored. Loss of any suitable habitat will put further pressure on these protected species.

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS– the scheme protects the important track leading from Leak Hall Lane to the Methodist Chapel on Cumberworth Lane, but appropriate boundary treatment will be important to prevent this becoming a tunnel. Close boarded six-foot fences that close off views across the valley should be avoided. This section is a key link in many of the popular walk routes in ‘Walkers Are Welcome’ leaflets for walkers around Denby Dale Parish.

Another important route to school exists from Leak Hall Road, and I applaud that this path is kept open, but what is it’s status? Does it remain permissive? (Apparently agreement has expired). The current fence & path was put in by the applicant when they fenced off the land. This path runs alongside the fence to 27 Leak Hall Lane, replacing a casual path across the site which can be seen on the aerial photos from 2000 and earlier. In the proposals, this is kept as narrow & tight as now, which seems to be a missed opportunity. Who will maintain this very narrow path in future? There also appears to be potential for conflict with the new road access and pedestrians emerging from this link, especially families. Could this route not be incorporated better into the design?