

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

FOR LAND AT
LUMB LANE NURSERIES, LUMB LANE,
ALMONDBURY



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2 - INTRODUCTION & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We are proposing the redevelopment of the Lumb Lane Commercial Nurseries site in Almondbury for much-needed housing. This previously developed, underutilised land (approximately 0.26 hectares) sits within the Green Belt but is a prime example of “Grey Belt” land, a brownfield site in the Green Belt that has for over 50 years not been open land. Our vision is to transform this derelict nursery site into a small cluster of new homes that blend with the local character, enhances the environment, and meets local housing needs. In summary:

Previously Developed “Grey Belt” Site: The site is largely hard-surfaced and contains permanent structures (around 80% hardstanding and 60% built form). It is clearly urban in character, not open countryside, and does not perform typical Green Belt functions. National policy now explicitly recognises such sites as “grey belt,” meaning they do not strongly contribute to Green Belt purposes and can be regarded as suitable for development.



Above: Aerial of application site

No Harm to Green Belt, Improvement Instead: Redevelopment will not increase the built footprint beyond existing conditions and can in fact reduce it, opening up a large part of the site as green space. By replacing derelict glasshouses, permanent buildings and asphalt with landscaped gardens and well-designed homes, we will improve openness and visual amenity. In a recent design exercise, it was shown that returning a significant portion of the site to open landscape is a *major benefit*, enabling at least a 10% biodiversity net gain. We firmly believe this project will make the Green Belt “better than before” aligning with the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy to prevent sprawl while enhancing the environment. The site is within the existing built up area and is surrounded on three sides by housing.

Sustainable Housing to Meet Local Needs: The scheme would deliver 5 new family homes (a mix of 3, 4, and 5-bedroom houses) to help address unmet local housing need. All homes will be design-led and sustainability-focused, aiming for high energy efficiency and low-carbon emissions in-line with local and national climate ambitions. The location is adjacent to an established residential area, making it a logical *infill* that reinforces the village settlement boundary without extending development into open countryside.

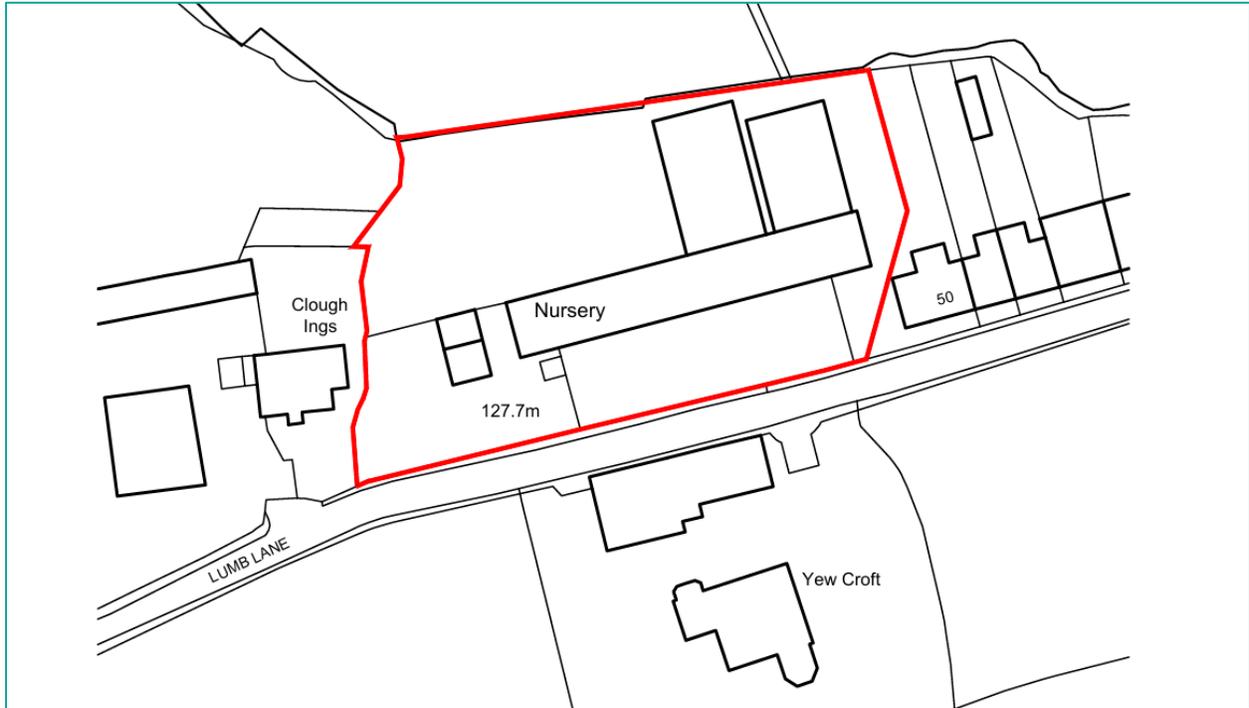
High-Quality Design and Access: Our design approach takes cues from successful local developments. Homes will be built in local vernacular style (e.g. using reclaimed Yorkshire stone and pitched stone slate-effect roofs) to blend seamlessly with nearby cottages and houses. The layout is carefully considered to maintain privacy for neighbours, provide each new home with quality garden space, and ensuring safe access from Lumb Lane. We will improve highway safety by realigning the site entrance for better visibility and create a new pedestrian footway along the site frontage, addressing the current lack of pavement on this stretch. Adequate off-street parking and turning space will be provided so vehicles enter and exit in forward gear.

Community Benefits: Beyond providing new housing, the proposal brings multiple benefits: removal of an eyesore and potential anti-social behaviour hotspot, enhanced landscaping and biodiversity (with native planting and greenspace accessible to residents), and design measures for community safety (clear boundary treatments, lighting, and natural surveillance to deter crime). We are committed to meeting Secure by Design principles, for example, houses will overlook public areas, boundaries will be well-defined with low walls/fences and defensible planting, and modern security features (dusk-to-dawn lighting, secure locks, alarms) will be included to ensure a safe and welcoming development.

In conclusion, this project represents exactly the kind of positive, sustainable development that current planning policy encourages on suitable “grey belt” sites, specifically to boost numbers where a council has an unmet housing target. It reuses a derelict brownfield site to deliver new homes in a way that respects the Green Belt’s purpose and improves the area.

3 - SITE OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

Location & Site Description: The site is located off Lumb Lane in Almondbury, Huddersfield, and is known as Lumb Lane Commercial Nurseries. It extends to roughly 0.26 hectares and is currently occupied by remnants of a former plant nursery business. On the ground, this includes several permanent structures (such as a disused single-story shop building) and extensive hardstanding including old greenhouses and yard areas. In fact, the majority of the land is covered by buildings or paving, which means it clearly meets the NPPF Annex 2 definition of Previously Developed Land (PDL). Only a small portion at the very rear is undeveloped, and even that area is enclosed by the site's past operations.



Above: Location Plan

Surroundings: The site is located within an established residential enclave. Long-standing houses border it to the east, west, and south (we count about 10 existing homes adjoining the site). This built context gives the site an undeniably urban, contained character. Standing on the site, one is *surrounded by development*, it does not feel open or rural at all. The only access is via Lumb Lane along the southern boundary of the site. Lumb Lane itself is a rural lane with no pavement over much of its length, and it primarily serves local homes and farms. To the north of the site lies open fields rising towards Castle Hill; however, our site sits within the village footprint and does not protrude into the countryside.

Current Condition: The nursery use has ceased, leaving the site unused and derelict. The old buildings and hard surfaces mean the land is not green or scenic, it is effectively a brownfield pocket within the village. Vegetation is limited mostly to some overgrown grass or scrub at the periphery. The derelict structures detract from local amenity, and there is an opportunity here to visually enhance the area through redevelopment. Importantly, because the site is already enclosed by other buildings and previously developed, its redevelopment would not encroach at all into open countryside or create new visual intrusion, instead, it offers a chance to *tidy up* and regenerate a blighted spot.



Heritage Note: We acknowledge that some neighbouring buildings are of historic interest (there is a row of charming stone cottages east of the site, some of which are listed, and other traditional dwellings nearby). Any design for this site will be sensitive to the heritage context, respecting scale, materials, and sightlines so as to preserve the setting of these historic assets. In the design approach section below, we outline how we intend to achieve a sympathetic integration.



Above: Adjacent Listed Cottages

4 - PROPOSAL

Development Overview: Our proposal is to build five new dwellings on the Lumb Lane Commercial Nurseries site, creating a small residential enclave that complements the existing pattern of housing provision within the local neighbourhood. Based on the preliminary design work, the scheme will consist of:

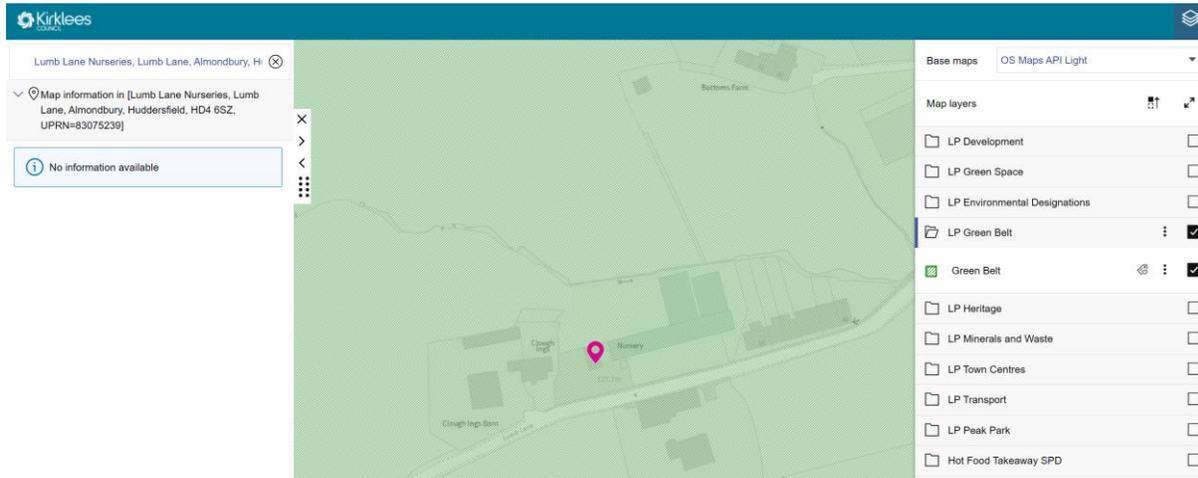
- 2 large detached houses (5-bedroom homes with integral garages), providing spacious family accommodation.
- 1 detached house (4-bedroom with a single garage), catering to families desiring a slightly smaller home.
- 1 pair of semi-detached houses: one 4-bedroom and one 3-bedroom, each with a detached garage, these slightly smaller homes diversify the mix and could appeal to younger families or down-sizers.

This mix of 5 units is deliberately kept modest in scale and density to reflect the character of the area (which is characterized by individual houses and cottages). The total developed area (building footprints and driveways) will be considerably less than what currently exists on site. By our estimates, less than half the site will be covered by built structures over half of the site will be returned to gardens or open land rather than covered in hard surfaces, a dramatic improvement from the near 80-88% coverage that exists now. Fewer, better-designed buildings will replace the haphazard sprawl of sheds and greenhouses. This ensures that the overall intensity of development is low, consistent with an “infill” ethos rather than a dense estate.



Above: Proposed Site Layout

5 - PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT



Above: Kirklees Local Plan

Previously Developed Land Exception (NPPF Para 154g): Under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (updated December 2024), redevelopment of previously developed sites in the Green Belt can be permissible. Specifically, paragraph 154(g) of the NPPF allows “limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land” in the Green Belt as long as it does not lead to substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt or conflict with its purposes. Our site clearly qualifies for this exception, it is undoubtedly previously developed (not a green field or agricultural land). Moreover, given the site’s enclosed nature and existing built footprint, we can redevelop it while decreasing the overall bulk of development. In fact, by *reducing* the spread of structures (removing large greenhouse spans and concentrating built form into well-designed houses), the openness can be maintained or even improved. Any new buildings will be within the volume and height parameters of what’s already on or around the site, ensuring no greater visual impact on the Green Belt. As the NPPF suggests, this kind of previously-developed “infill” redevelopment can be an appropriate way to bring forward new housing while respecting Green Belt objectives.

“Grey Belt” Designation: A very relevant recent change in policy is the formal recognition of what is colloquially called “Grey Belt.” This term refers to land within the Green Belt that is previously developed and does not strongly fulfil Green Belt purposes (a), (b), or (d) in other words, sites that are in the Green Belt on paper but, on the ground, don’t really act like open countryside needing protection. The revised NPPF (Dec 2024) updated the Annex 2 definitions and accompanying guidance to solidify this concept. Notably, hardstanding (previously developed surfaces) now explicitly count towards the “previously developed” status

Our site is a textbook example of Grey Belt land. It lies within the Green Belt boundaries but is a built-up brownfield pocket. It does *not* strongly check urban sprawl, *nor* prevent towns from merging, *nor* preserve any special historic setting, these are three of the five Green Belt purposes that Grey Belt policy tests. Instead, the site is surrounded by existing development and has no public access or landscape value, meaning its removal from the Green Belt or its redevelopment would not undermine the overall Green Belt function in this area. Recognizing a site as “grey belt” can significantly alter how planners view it: rather than an automatic “no,” such a site can be seen as a logical candidate to help meet unmet housing needs without sacrificing true countryside.

Local Plan Implications: Paragraph 155 of the NPPF encourages local authorities to undertake strategic reviews of Green Belt boundaries where sustainable development needs (like housing supply) cannot be met otherwise. Kirklees is currently reviewing its now out of date Local Plan. By removing a small, enclosed brownfield site from the Green Belt and allocating it for housing, the Council can deliver new homes in a sustainable location while *reinforcing* the surrounding Green Belt where it truly matters (the site’s development would form a firm landscaped boundary, helping avoid pressure to sprawl elsewhere). This approach aligns with national policy signals: use previously-developed pockets first, and avoid “unnecessary sprawl” onto green fields. In essence, we’re asking Kirklees to acknowledge this site’s unique status and potential by re-designating it for residential use.



Above: Aerial View

Planning Approvals within Kirklees in Grey Belt Sites

- Edge of Village Plot in Emley, Approved as Grey Belt (Kirklees): 2025/91232 approval in July 2025, a single dwelling on a village-edge Green Belt site in Kirklees was approved as it qualified as Grey Belt and was a minor development.
- Demolition of existing stable buildings and erection of detached dwelling at Wooldale, Holmfirth: 2025/90734, approved June 25
- Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of replacement dwelling at Long Moor Lane, Shelley: 2025/91092, approved July 25. Less than 0.5h therefore golden rules do not apply, as reference in the officer report by Elenya Jackson
“It is considered that The ‘Golden Rules’ in paragraphs do not apply in this case, as they relate specifically to larger-scale or plan-led allocations of Grey Belt land involving multiple homes or mixed-use development.”
- Former Woodville Nurseries, Northfield Lane, Highburton: 2016/92316 approval for the erection of two detached dwellings, approved in June 2017

Relevant Appeal Decisions and “Grey Belt” Precedents

Our confidence in this proposal is bolstered by a wave of recent planning appeal decisions across the country where inspectors have supported housing on Grey Belt sites. This is not just a theoretical policy, it’s happening in practice, even for Green Belt locations similar to ours. Some noteworthy examples include:

- **Former Nursery Site in Kent, Allowed on Appeal (Feb 2025):** A proposal for 57 dwellings and a children’s nursery at a former nursery site in Hadlow, Tonbridge & Malling was approved on appeal. The inspector explicitly found the land to constitute “grey belt” and noted that the scheme complied with the new policy tests (sometimes referred to as the “Golden Rules” of grey belt development). Despite being Green Belt, the site’s previously-developed nature and contained location meant the development caused no unacceptable harm to openness or Green Belt purposes. This parallels our situation closely (albeit on a larger scale), demonstrating that well-contained brownfield sites can be developed for housing under the new policy framework.
- **Infill Housing in Surrey, No Harm to Openness:** An appeal for a small infill of 2–3 houses on a Green Belt site at Rook Lane, Chaldon was allowed, with the inspector deeming the site Grey Belt. The key reasons were a *clear need for homes* in that area and a finding that the development would have no impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Essentially, because the plot was surrounded by existing buildings (much like our site is), building a couple of houses there didn’t undermine the openness that Green Belt is meant to protect. We similarly argue that building 5 houses on our enclosed site will not perceptibly change the openness compared to the status quo, especially since we plan to keep large portions of the site as gardens and landscaping.
- **Brownfield Yard in Barnsley, Deemed Not to Contribute to Green Belt Purposes:** In another case, land at Brierley in Barnsley (a former stables with some unauthorized residential use) was granted permission on appeal after the inspector concluded the site was effectively Grey Belt. The inspector stated the site “*does not contribute to any Green Belt purposes*” and thus its development for residential use was appropriate and caused no harm. This language resonates strongly with our view of Lumb Lane Commercial Nurseries, our site likewise does not serve the typical purposes of Green Belt (it isn’t preventing sprawl, isn’t safeguarding a countryside gap, etc.). The Barnsley decision shows that inspectors are taking a *site-specific, pragmatic view* of such previously developed enclaves, rather than rigidly applying Green Belt constraints where they aren’t warranted.
- **Edge of Village Plot, Allowed as Grey Belt (Warwickshire):** In a January 2025 decision, a single dwelling on a village-edge Green Belt site in Warwick/Solihull was approved as it qualified as Grey Belt and was a minor development. The inspector noted that since it was a small proposal and the site didn’t strongly meet Green Belt purposes, it was not inappropriate development. This again underlines that even small-scale housing proposals can succeed in Green Belt when the site’s characteristics meet the Grey Belt criteria.
- **Land North of Hemingfield Road, Barnsley, Outline for between 165 & 180 new dwellings on Grey Belt Land - Appeal Ref: APP/R4408/W/25/3359917**

These cases (and many others nationwide) highlight a trend: “Grey Belt” sites are increasingly being released for development to help tackle severe housing shortages, with roughly 1 in 3 such housing appeals now being allowed. In fact, planning experts predict that Grey Belt policy could triple the number of acceptable housing sites coming from Green Belt land by focusing on those that have low environmental or strategic value. Councils like Kirklees should take note of this shift, by proactively identifying and allocating Grey Belt sites like Lumb Lane Commercial Nurseries, in order to meet unmet housing need. This approach accommodates growth in a sustainable way and avoids more controversial proposals on truly open Green Belt land.

We have carefully studied these appeal decisions & approvals, and planned our proposal to align with the factors that underpin the new NPPF requirements.

- We demonstrate the site is clearly previously developed and does not serve core Green Belt functions (as supported by our site analysis and the context).
- We aim to meet local needs and provide community benefits, echoing the “Golden Rules” inspectors look for in Grey Belt cases. For instance, while our project is small and therefore not a “major” development.
- We take a case-by-case, site-specific approach in-line with how Grey Belt is determined. As one Inspector put it, determining Grey Belt land is best done *“at a site-specific level... otherwise the scale [of analysis] could be too large”*. We have honed in on the specific attributes of the Lumb Lane Nurseries site to make our case, rather than relying on broad parcel-based Green Belt analysis. The details of our site speak for themselves: it’s an island of previously-used derelict land enveloped by development, precisely the scenario Grey Belt policy is meant to address.

In summary, planning precedent strongly supports our contention that redeveloping this site is acceptable in principle. Both national policy direction and real-world decisions favour giving sites like this a constructive new use. We intend to reference these precedents and Grey Belt policy evolution directly in our application to reinforce the point that approving this development would not be a breach of policy but rather an implementation of the *latest guidance and the underlying objectives* of that policy.

6 - DESIGN PROPOSAL

Design and Appearance: The architectural design will take strong cues from the traditional character of Almondbury. We propose to use reclaimed and locally sourced stone for the walls, laid in courses to match the nearby cottages, along with reclaimed stone slates or high-quality reconstituted stone slates for the roofs to resemble natural stone roofing. The houses will be two stories (with maybe some variation like cat-slide roofs) to remain in keeping with the surrounding building heights. We are deliberately avoiding any overly modern or out-of-place styles, instead, the design will read as a natural extension of the village, perhaps with a contemporary twist on details (such as large energy-efficient windows or modern porch canopies) but always respectful of the local aesthetic. A key to community acceptance is showing that new development will “belong” in its context; our design narrative will emphasise how material choices and scale have been informed by a careful study of the neighbouring buildings. The result will be homes that look timeless, blending old and new, for example, traditional pitched roof forms and chimney features combined with modern interiors and sustainability features.



Each house will be individually designed but with a coherent theme, possibly using varied house types to create an organic feel (avoiding a repetitive “estate” look). The massing will be broken up, instead of one large block, the built form is spread into separate houses, and even those houses can have projecting and recessed elements to reduce perceived bulk. This approach, used in our earlier design iterations for the site, helps reconcile the fact that to one side we have small cottages and to the other side, two larger homes, by breaking each new house into smaller components or varying roof lines, we achieve a graduated scale transition across the site. In essence, the development will step gently between the existing buildings, ensuring no one feels overwhelmed by a sudden change in scale.



Layout and Landscaping: The houses will likely be arranged in a loose cluster or along a short internal lane/cul-de-sac that takes access from Lumb Lane. We are designing the layout to minimize impact on neighbours, for example, new houses will be set back from the boundaries where existing homes are very close, and we'll use orientation and screening to prevent any overlooking or privacy issues. Each home will have a generous private garden. Importantly, the outer edges of the site (especially the northern portion abutting open land) will remain largely free of development, acting as a natural buffer and transitioning into the surrounding Green Belt. We plan to incorporate extensive landscaping, including native tree and hedgerow planting around the periphery and between the new homes. This landscaping serves multiple purposes: enhancing aesthetics, improving biodiversity, increasing carbon sequestration capacity and providing "green edges" that soften the view of the development from any distance. The goal is that when someone looks towards the site from the open fields or from Castle Hill, they will see a verdant backdrop with houses nestled within, rather than a hard urban edge.



Heritage Sensitivity: As noted, we will be careful to preserve the setting of nearby heritage assets. This means maintaining appropriate setbacks from the listed cottages, keeping building heights in-line with existing structures and using boundary treatments such as stone walls that reflect traditional field divisions. During the detailed design stage, we will work with conservation officers to ensure our design has no adverse impact on the character of the area. In fact, by removing the dilapidated modern structures currently on site, we believe the development will enhance the heritage character of the conservation setting, replacing an eyesore with well-designed homes that complement the historic fabric.

7 - ACCESS AND HIGHWAYS DESIGN

Access and Highways

Vehicular access to the proposed development will be via a relocated entrance point on Lumb Lane, this will optimise visibility and safety. This repositioning has been designed in consultation with our highway engineers to maximise sight lines in both directions along Lumb Lane, which features several tight bends and limited forward visibility. By selecting the optimal point for ingress and egress, we can provide safe and convenient access for all users.

Once within the site, the internal access road will be designed with a turning head to accommodate delivery vans and emergency services, ensuring they can enter, turn, and exit in a forward gear. Each dwelling will benefit from at least two off-street parking spaces, many incorporating private driveways and garages, avoiding any overspill parking on Lumb Lane. Dwellings will share a bin collection point on the site frontage where the refuse vehicle can collect.



Pedestrian Improvements

A key benefit of the proposal is the potential improvement of a continuous pedestrian footway and grass verge along our site's frontage on Lumb Lane. Currently, remnants of a long-abandoned footpath force pedestrians to walk on the carriageway, creating a safety hazard.

We will offer a strip of our land to the Council (if required) to allow the formation of a proper, safe, and level footway along the length of our frontage, however following the advice given on the previous planning consultation, we have opted not to show this on the proposal for now.

Previous consultation which has been taken into consideration:

https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/planning-applications/search-for-planning-applications/filedownload.aspx?application_number=2024/90625&file_reference=1039628



RECOMMENDATION:

The proposals are acceptable from a Highways perspective. However, the footway along the frontage of the site should be removed from the proposals.

The proposed driveway uses the existing vehicle access to the site and parking is proposed for 4 vehicles which is more than adequate for a 3-bedroomed dwelling.

Internal turning has been proposed to ensure vehicles can enter and leave the site in forward gear,

This is acceptable in highway terms.

The approved vehicle parking areas will need to be surfaced and drained in accordance with the Communities and Local Government; and Environment Agencies 'Guidance on the permeable surfacing of front gardens (parking areas)' published 13th May 2009 (ISBN 9781409804864) as amended or superseded.

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pavingfrontgardens

The existing vehicular crossing will need to be extended to provide for the proposed widening of the driveway to the site.

The changes to the access within the adopted highway fronting the property, to provide a dropped kerb, will need to be constructed under a section 184 agreement of the 1980 Highways Act (vehicle crossings over footways and verges). You are required to consult the Design Engineer (Kirklees Street Scene: 01484 221000) with regard to obtaining this permission and approval of the construction specification. Interference with the highway without such permission is an offence which could lead to prosecution.

The Applicant has also proposed to provide a footway along the frontage of the site. However, due to the narrow road width of the road at this location the proposed footway would be substandard and, bearing in mind that the footway does not link to any other footways on the road, I would not support this element of the proposals.

Coupled with the cessation of large-scale commercial vehicle movements from the site (such as nursery delivery lorries and tractors), and the likely replacement with lower-intensity private car use, this scheme will provide a net gain in highway safety. If necessary, we will work with the highway authority to explore additional measures such as traffic calming, improved signage, or speed awareness features.

In addition, we will provide each plot with suitable garaging for the storage of bicycles.

Walking Routes and Local Facilities

The site is well-connected to Almondbury's village centre and key community amenities via existing pedestrian routes:

- **Bus Stops:** The nearest bus stop is located approximately 350m west of the site on Lumb Lane, providing regular services towards Huddersfield town centre and surrounding villages. This is accessible within a 5-minute walk along local roads.
- **Shops and Services:** Almondbury's main shopping parade, including convenience stores, cafés, pharmacies, and other local retailers, is approximately 800m from the site (around a 10-minute walk).
- **Community and Social Facilities:** Almondbury Library and community spaces, local pubs, and churches are within 900m–1km walking distance, supporting social interaction and community cohesion.
- **Education:** Several schools, including Almondbury Community School, are within a 1.2km walk, accessible via existing pavements and safe crossing points.
- **Leisure and Green Space:** Local parks and recreational areas are within a comfortable walking distance, with a public right of way to the east of our site.

8 - SECURITY AND CRIME PREVENTION

Security and Crime Prevention: In designing the layout, we have incorporated “Secure by Design” principles from the outset. This means all public or shared areas (like the new street or any parking courts) are overlooked by the houses, every home will have active frontages (windows, entrances) facing the street so that there are “eyes on the street” at all times. This natural surveillance deters opportunistic crime and fosters a safer community feel. We will define plot boundaries clearly, front gardens will be open and welcoming but demarcated perhaps by low stone walls or hedges, while rear gardens will be securely fenced (e.g. 1.8m timber fences with lattice tops as specified in our materials & crime prevention strategy). Lockable side gates will prevent easy access to back gardens from the street.

Lighting will be sensitively designed to balance security and rural character: we propose motion-activated (PIR) downlights on each house and at strategic points, which provide illumination when needed but avoid constant light pollution. Any street lighting we add will meet modern standards (BS5489) but could be on shorter columns with downlighting to minimize glare, subject to council approval. Each home will be fitted with a modern intruder alarm system and robust doors and windows (meeting PAS 24 and Part Q standards) for physical security. These measures come straight from proven approaches in other successful developments and ensure that future residents feel safe and secure in their homes.

9 - SUSTAINABILITY AND BIODIVERSITY

In addition to the wider environmental benefits associated with removing the former nursery buildings and reintroducing landscaped gardens, our proposals for Lumb Lane Nurseries are designed to achieve high levels of sustainability, comfort, and climate resilience, while enhancing local biodiversity.

Low-Carbon and Energy-Efficient Design

Each dwelling will be constructed to exceed current Building Regulation requirements for thermal performance, ensuring very high insulation levels and reduced heating demand. Heating will be provided by Air Source Heat Pumps for every home, removing reliance on fossil fuel systems. In addition, each dwelling will incorporate integrated solar PV panels, providing on-site renewable electricity generation to further reduce carbon emissions. These measures, combined with a focus on passive design strategies, will deliver highly energy-efficient homes that minimise environmental impact while respecting the character of the surrounding built environment.



Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

To support the transition to low-carbon transport, each plot will be fitted with an Electric Vehicle Charging Point as standard, enabling residents to charge vehicles at home. Each dwelling will also have a garage for bicycle storage.



Water and Drainage Management

Surface water from dwellings will be directed to individual soakaways, while drives and the internal road will be constructed using permeable surfacing to manage runoff in line with Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) principles. Every dwelling will also be supplied with a Water Butt to capture rainwater for garden use, reducing demand on mains supply.

Sustainable Living Features

Each rear garden will include a vegetable planter to encourage home-grown produce, alongside space for on-site composting, helping to reduce household waste and promote a circular approach to resources. Where construction materials allow, using existing on site stone and reused to reduce embodied carbon.



Biodiversity Enhancement

The landscaping strategy has been designed to significantly improve habitat diversity and ecological value. We will retain all existing mature trees and supplement them with a variety of new species, including Rowan, Bird Cherry, Juneberry, Crab Apple, Wild Cherry, and Hawthorn. Shrub and groundcover planting will be carefully chosen for wildlife benefit — with nectar-rich flowers, berry-producing species, and year-round shelter — supporting pollinators, birds, and small mammals. Measures such as wildflower grass areas, bird boxes, and bat roosting features will contribute to achieving a Biodiversity Net Gain of at least +10%.

Designing for a Greener Future

Collectively, these measures ensure that the development delivers more than housing — it will provide future-proofed, low-carbon homes that actively contribute to a healthier, greener Almondbury. The combination of renewable energy, sustainable drainage, biodiversity-focused landscaping, and resident-friendly growing spaces will leave the site in a better environmental condition than it has been in decades.

10 - COMMUNITY BENEFITS AND PLANNING BALANCE

When considering a proposal in the Green Belt (even a Grey Belt one), it's important to weigh the benefits against any perceived harms. We have thoroughly examined the planning balance for this project, and we conclude that the benefits are substantial, and any residual harm is negligible:

- Housing Delivery:** The development provides five new homes in an area with documented unmet housing need. Kirklees has significant unmet housing targets and affordability pressures. While five homes is a small contribution, every bit helps, especially when those homes can be delivered on a derelict site like this with minimal controversy. Importantly, these homes would broaden choice in the local market (mix of sizes) and could help retain local families or key workers in the area.
- Removal of Dereliction & Visual Improvement:** The site is currently an eyesore; redeveloping it will vastly improve the visual character of the immediate area. What is now broken glass, abandoned buildings, crumbling asphalt, and overgrown weeds will become attractive stone-built homes and landscaped gardens. This uplift in appearance is a benefit not just to new residents but to existing neighbours and anyone passing by. It's essentially *community-based regeneration*, turning a failed brownfield site into a vibrant part of the community. The local amenity gain from this should not be underestimated, it's about making the place nicer for everyone.
- Environmental Gains:** We expect to deliver a biodiversity net gain of at least ten percent on site, meaning that once the development is complete, the land will support more birds, bats, insects, and plant life than it does today. The removal of the disused nursery buildings gives us the chance to address any remnants of past operations, including the potential for oil and chemical residues in the soil, which we will remediate where necessary. The landscaping will replace hardstanding with planting, permeable surfaces, and new habitat, supported by the retention of existing mature trees. The new homes will carry a far lower carbon footprint than the old, energy-inefficient structures, thanks to modern construction standards, air source heat pumps, and other sustainable features. Crucially, this is not an isolated development — it sits within easy walking distance of Almondbury's shops, schools, bus stops, and community facilities. This location allows residents to meet day-to-day needs through active travel and without relying on long car journeys, making full use of existing infrastructure and embedding the scheme within the life of the village.
- Infrastructure & Highways:** The scheme allows for an improved footway along Lumb Lane, which is a tangible benefit to public safety and encourages active travel. The small scale means it will not place any meaningful strain on local services, five families will integrate easily into the existing community fabric.
- Jobs and Materials:** It is intended to use local contractors and suppliers, to provide materials and labour. Each element of procurement will emphasise the importance given to local sourcing, thereby providing social and economic gain.
- Very Special Circumstances (if needed):** In Green Belt terms, one usually has to demonstrate "very special circumstances" (VSC) for approval if a proposal is deemed inappropriate development. In our case, we contend the proposal is not inappropriate at all due to the NPPF 154(g) allowance, meaning the standard Green Belt harm test is not triggered. However, even if a decision-maker were to consider it "inappropriate" by strict interpretation, we have a robust case for VSC. The combination of benefits listed (brownfield reuse, housing need, visual improvement, safety enhancements, sustainability performance, biodiversity gain, etc.) clearly outweighs any nominal harm to the Green Belt (which, as argued, is essentially none in terms of openness or purpose). Recent appeal decisions on Grey Belt sites have

frequently cited such site-specific benefits as part of the compelling justification for permitting development. We do the same, showcasing that keeping this site locked as unused derelict brownfield serves no one’s interest, whereas developing it brings a range of positives.

11 - CONCLUSIONS

“The Commercial Nurseries site at Lumb Lane is exactly the kind of opportunity that the NPPF and the revision of Kirklees Local Plan are seeking to identify.” This site presents a rare win-win scenario. By permitting development here, the Council can secure new housing and community benefits without compromising the integrity of the Green Belt. Indeed, it follows the *spirit of recent planning reforms* aimed at regenerating neglected derelict land and focusing growth on the most sustainable locations.

We have put forward a comprehensive and carefully considered proposal, supported by national policy priorities and real examples of success. Our tone is confident because we truly believe in the merits of this project, it is rooted in common sense planning principles and a passion for creating great sustainable places. We are also conversational in our approach because we aim to work collaboratively with planners, stakeholders, and the community to refine the proposal and address any concerns openly.



In closing, we respectfully request that the Council favourably consider the grant of planning permission for the redevelopment of Lumb Lane Nurseries. The evidence is clear that this previously developed, currently derelict “grey belt” site can be transformed in a way that adheres to policy and benefits everyone. We look forward to continuing the dialogue and moving toward a successful outcome where this currently wasted site becomes a shining example of sustainable development in Kirklees.