

13th February 2026

Dear Sirs

RE: Planning Application 2025/60/93572/E

Outline application with all matters reserved, bar vehicle access into the site, for erection of up to 123 dwellings with associated works including open space, landscaping, drainage infrastructure.

I wish to object to the proposed development of Green Belt Land to the south of Barnsley Road, Upper Cumberworth, Huddersfield, HD8 8NN. As an immediate neighbour, I am of the view that the proposed development does not fall in line with the commitments made and duties held by Kirklees Council and will have a serious and detrimental impact upon the local area.

Compliance with the Adopted Local Plan

The adopted Kirklees Local Plan is still undergoing review and whilst the process of site allocation for development is not expected until 2026/2027 the council is duty bound to adhere to guiding principles and its existing commitments.

- Commitment to the re-use of existing buildings and the use of brownfield land to meet development needs support the regeneration of areas.
Across Kirklees there are a number of brownfield sites where buildings have been demolished or are now unused (as noted in the Local Plan) which represent a valuable source of development land, especially for housing without the need to encroach upon land designated as Green Belt.
- Commitment to preserve and retain the local character and distinctiveness of Kirklees and its places.
- To maintain the overall role and function of the green belt and prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.
The proposed development disregards the local character of Upper Cumberworth by undermining the existing organic nucleated rural village, encroaching upon the green landscape, and contributing to 'urban sprawl.'
- Commitment to place shaping principles and the spatial development strategy.
The Spatial Development Strategy considered the role and function of the green belt, the topography of the district, existing and planned levels of infrastructure, local need for development and recognition of open spaces in urban areas, the conclusion of which was a need for zero (0) new dwellings being required in Upper Cumberworth.
- Maintaining natural, built, and historic environments including the protection and enhancement of heritage assets.
The proposed site consists of mature farmland and adjoins a wooded river valley which forms part of the Dearne Valley Corridor, which once lost cannot be replaced.

The development would directly impact the Upper Cumberworth Conservation Area by adversely affecting the 'extensive views' from the elevated settlement into the valleys below. It would also compromise the rural setting of the Upper Cumberworth Conservation Area which contributes significantly to the character and appearance of the local area, emphasising the agricultural origins of the village and surroundings.

Green Belt

The proposed site is designated Green Belt land, and the proposal does not fall within any of the appropriate exceptions or special circumstances for development.

Development of land designated as Green Belt requires 'very special circumstances' to obtain approval, where the benefits of the development can be clearly shown to outweigh the need to safeguard the status of site. In this case, the impact would be an irreversible loss of an open space and a piece of valuable agricultural land that provides a buffer between the villages of Upper Cumberworth and Denby Dale.

The proposed development does not meet the Government commitment of a brownfield-first approach. The site would not even meet the threshold for identification as 'grey belt land' under the National Planning Policy Framework 2024, which prioritises lower quality land within Green Belt areas for development within a strict framework of 'golden rules'.

The proposed development site and adjacent ancient woodlands are an essential component of the landscape, character and heritage of the village providing a physical and visual amenity as well as significant wildlife value. Kirklees acknowledges its duty (in the Adopted Local Plan) to protect and improve green infrastructure to support health and well-being and to support habitats. The loss of this space if the development proposal is approved would go directly against that duty.

Wildlife

Any development should balance economic, social, and environmental priorities, and make efficient and effective use of land ... with minimal effect on the environment (Adopted Local Plan). The proposed development would have a direct and detrimental impact upon the local environment by irreversibly removing key arable land as well as both natural and semi-natural habitats for the local flora and fauna.

Under the Kirklees Local Plan - Strategy and Policies 129 13 Natural environment, all development proposals are required to result in no significant loss or harm to biodiversity. The proposed development site borders the Kirklees Wildlife Habitat Network and encompasses the following elements.

- Arable fields with mature trees providing habitat for a variety of birds, small and large mammals, and a range of flora.
- An assortment of field boundaries, with a mixture of hedges, fencing and traditional stone walls providing a range of semi-natural habitats.

And sits directly adjacent to ancient woodlands which are noted as providing the following (Kirklees Landscape Charter Assessment 2015).

- Extensive woodlands which are of important nature conservation interest.
- Semi-natural riparian woodland and wetland habitats associated with the watercourses which are also of nature conservation value.

With no prospect of avoidance, the development would have a significant impact upon biodiversity within the area, removing and adversely affecting local habitats.

Local Facilities and Services

Recent and ongoing housing developments in the local area (including Shepley, Denby Dale, Skelmanthorpe and Lepton) are increasing the housing density of the wider region and placing additional pressure on local services and infra-structure without extra provision to meet the growing need.

This additional development if approved would further exacerbate the issue already at hand.

The current capacity of infrastructure for the water supply, wastewater and its treatment in the local area are already in question with repeated and ongoing issues with water pressure, water quality, and repeated water leaks already a common occurrence causing disruption to local roads, businesses, homes, and families. This proposal would place further pressure on infrastructure that is already at/over capacity as evidenced by the current issues.

Highways

The rural nature of Upper Cumberworth combined with a lack of reliable public transport links and poor footpaths, mean that most journeys in, around and out of the area are made by private car. The A635 Barnsley Road, including the junctions at The Star Inn and Sovereign public houses are already busy commuter/business routes and known to be high risk accident areas with significant heavy goods and quarry traffic. This proposal introduces the potential for a substantial increase in road traffic directly entering the A635 Barnsley Road increasing the risk of accident to both pedestrians and vehicles alike.

The dirt, noise and danger created by the traffic upon Cumberworth Lane is already noted as marginalising pedestrians and damaging the appearance and environment within the Upper Cumberworth Conservation Area, (Upper Cumberworth Conservation Area Appraisal). This development if approved will create additional traffic congestion within Upper Cumberworth and surrounding villages affecting the environmental quality by air, noise, odour, and other forms of pollution that will impact on quality of life, the well-being of people and the environment.

Landscape

Under the Adopted Local Plan, Kirklees have committed to protect and enhance the characteristics of the built, natural, and historic environment by avoiding allocating land to development which would significantly harm these assets. This commitment recognises the diverse character of the district as a whole and within its different character areas. This includes the landscape of Upper Cumberworth and the wider Dearne Valley area where villages and towns are generally well separated by open countryside creating a sense of local identity.

This perspective is clearly outlined within the Upper Cumberworth Conservation Area Appraisal, ‘...looking south [towards the proposed site currently] allows appreciation of the stone-built properties of agricultural origin, bounded by dry stone walls and fields within the green belt. From the elevated situation of Birdsedge and High Flatts to the south, the clustered nature of the stone slated roofs and tower of St Nicholas church are an attractive historical and geographical point of reference in the distance .

As acknowledged by the applicants own Landscape Visual Survey) the ‘magnitude of change to the views of the ancient woodland and longer-range views to open countryside in the south would be Major, as the proposed residential development will be in full view and the introduced houses will screen views of the wood and countryside beyond the site. The magnitude of change being Major, leading to likely effects of Moderate and Moderate Major Adverse respectively’.

The likely long-term effects with the maturing of the landscape and proposed mitigations are still assessed as Moderate Adverse

If this development proceeds, then 13.67 acres of green belt land which characterise this area will be irreversibly lost.

Within Kirklees there are a wide range of sites designated and protected for their biodiversity and geodiversity importance. These include the Upper Cumberworth Conservation Area and Ancient Woodland (Stephen Wood), Dearne Park and the Upper Dearne Woodlands Nature Reserve all of which would be directly impacted by this development proposal. I ask that Kirklees acknowledge the presence of the ancient woodlands and the ancient and veteran trees within and abutting the site and act (as they have committed to doing) to safeguard and preserve those which are not protected by statutory designation and resist this proposed development which threatens them.

Archaeology

The existence of medieval structures and evidence of prehistoric activity/artefacts within the adjacent ancient woodland would strongly support the position that the proposed site is likely to hold evidence of local cultural and historical significance. In addition, given previous experience in the area of the 'loss' of archaeologically significant sites (remains thought to be of British Celtic origin at 'Burnt Cumberworth') due to recent quarrying activities, the potential value of this site must not be lost through needless development.

West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service have noted that the site is located within a wider landscape containing significant evidence of early occupation dating from the prehistoric and Roman period and its location adjacent to the historic thoroughfare of the linear village, suggests potential for unrecorded medieval settlement expansion.

Their recommendation is that (at the very least) evaluation and investigation is undertaken prior to the determination of the planning application.

Conclusion

This application is in short, speculative, and intended to undermine the 'plan-led' approach that preserves local communities and the character and distinctiveness of Kirklees as set out to be protected in the Adopted Local Plan.

If planning officers are persuaded to recommend approval of this application, I request referral to Planning Committee to allow appropriate discussion and public scrutiny prior to a decision being made.