

## **Proposed Development: Upper Cumberworth 2025/60/93572/E**

The following are a range of concerns and objections concerning the above proposal, submitted by the Upper Dearne Woods Conservation Group. The Group has been in existence for around 30 years, with the remit of maintaining and enhancing public access and the ecology of what is regarded as a complex of ancient woodlands. The Upper Stephen Wood section of this complex forms the southern edge of the development site.

### **1.Loss of Green Belt**

Building on this stretch of green belt will degrade the ecology of the Woods, reducing the access corridors for wild life. The Group sees no valid reason for the loss of this area of green belt, particularly as this proposal appears to pre-empt the Authority's own plans to re-allocate development land across the Authority by 2027.

### **2.Footfall and Access**

We have major concerns about the increase in footfall, particularly dog traffic, this development will encourage. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the current footfall level is already creating ecological pressures, for example, in contributing to a decline in nesting wood ants across the woods, one of its signature species.

The proposed footpath access on to the public path by Greenwood House is of particular concern if it permits unlimited cycle access into the Woods. This would not only constitute a major source of disturbance, but is also expressly forbidden under the terms of the Kirklees Access Agreement with Hepworth Iron, their owners.

### **3. Drainage and Hydrology.**

**The Group have major concerns that the development will disrupt the flow of springs from the earmarked fields into Park Dike. These are a significant contributor to the Dike's flow, particularly in times of low rainfall. Disruption of the Dike's flow would have a major adverse impact on its ecology, particularly in times of drought.**

**Other significant concerns centre on the topography of the site, with its steep slope down to the Dike. We fear that the extensive hard standing of roads and drives will lead to significant surface water run off downslope, adversely affecting the water quality of the Dike which has historically been of a high standard. Our concerns are confirmed in the Huddeston flood risk report (5.3.1-5) which states that any overflow after heavy rainfall from the sewers and soakaways would be directed via storage tanks into Park Dike.**

**This drastic increase in volumes of water will not only adversely affect water quality but also significantly increase the risk of flooding at the ford downstream and erosion to the banks of the Dike near its confluence with the Dearne.**

**The past high ratings of the water quality in the Dike have been based on riverfly samples, both of the Dike and the upper reaches of the River Dearne itself, which the Dike feeds. Thus, any deterioration in water quality will have a significant impact on the whole Dearne river ecosystem.**

**(Riverfly biotic index monitoring gives an indication of water quality, based on invertebrates present. A formally registered sampling point has now been set up on Park Dike which will enable us to regularly monitor its water quality, the results of which will be directly reported to the Environment Agency.)**

#### **4. Ancient Woodland Protective Buffer**

**We understand that a 15 metre protective buffer is national policy in regard to development adjacent to ancient woodland. We note that the planned buffer appears to meet or exceed this in places, but would argue that the buffer needs to be at least 30 metres wide, considering the steep slope on the site, referred to earlier. We would welcome clarification as to who would be the responsible party for its maintenance. Without this, we fear that the buffer area would become a dumping ground and a source of unofficial routes into the Woods. This would degrade the quality of the woodland edge, a key ecological niche.**

**In conclusion the Group would like to state its objection to this development proposal, as it threatens the ecology of the wood in the ways outlined above.**

**Chair, on behalf of the Upper Dearne Woodlands Conservation Group**

**, Denby Dale Parish Countryside Project Officer**

**c/o 8 Broom bank**

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**11<sup>th</sup> February, 2026**