

REF: Upper Cumberworth 2025/60/93572/E

I have been a resident on Barnsley Road since 2002 some 24 years, I have raised my children in this village, they attended local schools throughout their education and they each attended Greenhead college. I am writing to OBJECT to the proposal of 123 houses on the field adjacent to the ancient woodland 'Stephen Wood' on Barnsley Road.

1. It isn't nearly enough to say that I am concerned about losing this beautiful greenbelt land, Kirklees should be too! This field was categorised as an Area of High Landscape Value on the former UDP, until that was replaced in 2019 by the Kirklees Local Plan and all areas were renamed broadly as greenbelt, but this recategorisation to greenbelt did not lessen its value within the countryside, absolutely nothing had changed nor has it changed since. It is land that should continue to remain untouched, to allow for the openness it presents and for its rural character to be maintained. The views across from Barnsley Road, beyond Birds Edge on to the Pennine Foothills is spectacular, the low walls (in keeping with their age) afford a wonderful vista. We must surely await the release of the final draft of the Kirklees Local Plan due January 2028 in which we MUST ensure that this field is maintained as greenbelt and never allow it to be under threat of being built over ever again. I strongly object to Vivly Living suggesting that this greenbelt field should be reclassified as 'Greybelt'.
2. These developers are not respecting the greenbelt, and they are not respecting the process that is in place for the New Local Plan and instead they are trying to force this planning application through ahead of time, hiding behind the need for New Housing in sustainable areas. However, Upper Cumberworth could *never* be called a sustainable area, and this site is poorly located for this type of definition. Our buses & trains are unreliable, the services irregular and are even more reduced at weekends. The journey times into town on the D1 bus for example is approximately 1hr 22mins long (26min in a car) and that is assuming the bus is on time or even running. This includes a 16 min walk down to Denby Dale along the A635, a fast, moving road, with one narrow & poorly lit pavement. If planning officers were to consult with any parents (past & present) in the Upper Cumberworth village, they would most likely hear that they have all had to do mad dashes to get their children to schools and college because of the unreliability of public transport, and yet a housing development of this size could potentially see a further 80+ more children being exposed to crossing a busy road, the A635 and navigating around a failing public transport. This is a small rural village not a small town, we do not have shops within reasonable walking distances, we all use our cars to access any services and 123 houses will only serve to make the situation worse with the potential of 200+ cars pulling onto Barnsley Road and trying to park in the already congested areas of the village. We have no supermarket, no GP surgery, no hairdresser, no café, no restaurants. There's very little employment in the village and so to reference your NPPF (Dec 24) paragraph 8, Upper Cumberworth and this development does not align with your objective for sustainable development, that being all three: social, economic and environmental.
3. On the subject of environmental, I strongly object to this development not only because of its overriding depletion of the greenbelt, but just as importantly the undoubtable long term and irreversible effects on the ancient woodland adjacent to the site. The developers have allowed a

15m buffer along the edge of Stephen Wood (our ancient woodland) and this is entirely inadequate. Having read your NPPF (Dec 24) it clearly states in paragraph 179 that the objective of an approved development is to protect and enhance biodiversity. But this would be simply impossible to achieve as this woodland is fed from the water that comes from the multiple springs in the field. These will be lost and replaced with water pollution from Urban runoff.

There is a rich array of mammals, birds and invertebrates living in our ancient woodland and any changes made to the field will irrevocably harm their existence entirely, risks to wildlife would include additional domestic cats preying on the wildlife. The Flora and Fauna are also vulnerable.

There is a beautiful bank below the boundary wall on the south edge, wild snow drops and bluebells appear every spring; they could be potentially lost with poor water supply, pollution and over trampling. I believe these wild flowers to be protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

One more important thing to mention, which has been completely overlooked by the reports submitted by Vivly Living, is the **Northern Wood Ant**, *Formica Lugubris* – known locally as the Hairy Wood Ant. Please refer to your own Kirklees Biodiversity Action Plan, and you will see that the protection of the Hairy Northern Wood Ant is part of your 'Species Action Plan'. This little but very significant invertebrate is an internationally important Red Databook listed species. This Ant lives in one site in Kirklees and that site is in our Ancient Wood. This plan states that the site is protected by Kirklees, and that the target is to maintain the colony at the size it is now or increase the current size; Kirklees' objectives are to maintain the colony, ideally increasing its size with appropriate woodland management.

The conservation concerns in this plan are 'Loss of suitable woodland habitat through agricultural clearance, urban or industrial development'. Clearly the risk that this development poses to these woods and the protected Hairy Wood Ant other than those already highlighted are:

- Trampling due to more frequent activity, build this many homes at the very edge of Stephen Wood and it will bring more walkers
- More dogs being walked in there
- The creation of informal access routes outside of the usual paths & potentially new occupants forcing new ways into the woods by knocking down historic walls at the back of the development.

4. I believe there are many more reasons for refusing this application such as the harming of Heritage Assets - including archaeological remains -, the increase in vehicles on the road which has the potential for more accidents, and the impact that 123 houses will have on an already struggling drainage infrastructure. But I will focus on one last subject, and that is the footpath that forms the access into the woods from Barnsley Road along the eastern edge of the proposed plan. This is an ancient footpath that has at least two old growth sycamore trees growing within the boundary line, I raised my concerns for their welfare with CECAG and they were assured by the tree officer Hazel Irving that these trees will be given a proper assessment, I believe they too deserve to have a TPO on them. But of concern also is the height of the field to the footpath and that the proposed fencing and apartments are wholly inappropriate and will force damage to the beautiful drystone walling and all of the green moss that thrives on it. I believe that this moss is also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and destruction from site plant machinery and the erection of fencing as can be seen at other Vivly building developments should not be allowed. Very important views will be lost by the height of the fencing and any development will destroy for ever, this most remarkable access to the most beautiful of woods.

I urge you to refuse this planning application, and I further urge you to ensure that this field is never put under threat again by protecting it and the two other fields that run along the edge of the woods down Barnsley Road in the proposed New Local Plan to be published early 2028.