

Application number 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.

Dear Sirs,

I wish to object on the following grounds:

1. The development is in an area designated as Green Belt in the adopted Kirklees Local Plan. The National Planning Policy Framework states that development in Green Belt should only be considered under “very special circumstances”. The applicant has not adequately demonstrated “very special circumstances” to de-classify this land. The site forms an important division between the adjacent villages of Cumberworth & Denby Dale; and Cumberworth & Birdsedge, without which there is a danger of the unique identity of the villages being turned into mass urban sprawl. There is no overwhelming argument to locate this development on the proposed site.
2. The proposed site is also adjacent to the ancient woodland of Stephen Wood. This is of national importance and is to be afforded the highest level of protection. It is a quiet and peaceful haven for wildlife and the close proximity of the proposed large built-up housing estate with the ensuing effect of noise; light pollution; surface water run off; & loss of foraging space will have a serious effect on wildlife habitat. The proposed 15m buffer zone is nowhere near adequate to safeguard the protection of the woodland and the habitats it supports. Amongst other flora & fauna, the woodland supports colonies of Northern Wood Ant – a species on the red danger list, and with a stated target of conservation by Kirklees in their published Biodiversity Action Plan.
3. The site is designated as a Biodiversity Opportunity Zone by Kirklees. In this policy document, the stated objectives for the Pennine Foothills (of which this site is classified), is to: 1. Protect, restore and enhance network of hedgerows. 2. Protect, restore and expand areas of woodland, especially adjacent to ancient woodland sites. Clearly, the proposed development does neither of these.
4. There is a requirement for developments to deliver a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of 10% over & above the existing level of natural habitat. From the developer’s own reports, the proposal has a negative impact on BNG (although there is conflict in the reports & the extent of the negative impact is likely underestimated), with a loss of habitat and harm to trees & wildlife. The developer’s proposed solution to compensate for the loss of habitat is to offset by buying off site units – there has been little effort in replacing the habitat on site. More effort is needed in retaining existing trees and planting further trees to extend the woodland area. The loss of habitat to the village of Upper Cumberworth if the development is allowed to progress will be permanent & extremely harmful to biodiversity in the area. The cumulative effect of the continued urbanisation of South Kirklees is destroying nature.
5. The whole area of the south Kirklees villages has seen numerous housing developments over the recent years which have the effect of destroying the very unique semi-rural nature of the historic villages. Scissett, Denby Dale, Shepley, Shelley, Emley, Kirkburton, et al, have all seen major housing developments which effectively has turned the whole area into dormitory villages which dramatically increase commuter traffic on the road network. The villages have subsequently lost their identity and begun to merge into urban sprawl. They have become urban catchment areas serving Leeds,

Huddersfield Wakefield, Manchester, etc. This should not be further accelerated by the development in Upper Cumberworth.

6. The provision of 123 houses in a small village which has a population of 663 (2021 census) is completely out of scale. On the basis of a conservative estimate of 3 people per dwelling, the proposal would increase the population of the village by at least 55%. This is clearly a disproportionate increase to the size of the village which would have a detrimental impact on the character of the village.
7. The proposed development is in close proximity to the Upper Cumberworth Conservation Area. The scale of the proposed development and its relationship with the historic village core will have a detrimental impact on the setting of the Conservation Area
8. The location and scale of the development will also ruin the character and views of the local landscape. Upper Cumberworth is an ancient village (mentioned in the Domesday Book) It's setting within the natural landscape will be destroyed by the proposed large scale development which will dominate the village when seen from the higher ground heading up Park Lane.
9. The proposed development will further add to the volume of traffic already using local roads. Barnsley Road is extremely busy throughout the day and has a constant stream of traffic during morning & afternoon rush hours periods. The applicant's case that the development is well served with public transport links is a fallacy. Bus operations in Upper Cumberworth are sparse & unreliable. People will not walk to Denby Dale station along a fast road, on narrow leaf strewn pavements, and through dimly lit woodland where they feel unsafe, to catch a limited train service. We all know what will happen – the majority of people who are likely to occupy these proposed properties will work in adjacent urban centres and will travel to work each day by car, placing further pressure on already overcrowded local roads. How is this ever a sustainable development? You only have to observe the queues of traffic every weekday morning at Bretton roundabout with cars heading to Wakefield & Leeds; or the those at the Sovereign crossroads with cars heading to Huddersfield & Manchester. Housing should be provided within those urban centres- not in rural communities where the only viable travel option is by car.
10. The added road usage also creates a road safety hazard. Turning right to/from the development on a fast section of straight road will lead to a significant increase in the risk of road traffic accidents. The current 40mph speed limit is widely ignored and the proposed entry/exit point to the development is a very real safety concern. This will be further exacerbated by the recent consent to permit mining operations to take place at Bromley Farm with increased HGV movements also attempting to enter/exit Barnsley Road at the Bromley Farm waste facility junction only a 100m further down the road.
11. Additionally, the pedestrian access points to the proposed development are inadequate. Anyone who currently attempts to cross Barnsley Road from the village side of the road takes their life in their hands with the current traffic volumes. The development (along with those in surrounding villages already in the pipeline) will only add to these volumes and increase pedestrian risk. When are Kirklees going to wake up to the fact that road infrastructure is saturated and we are only making matters worse by consenting to housing developments such as this by encouraging further car use whilst at the same time positively discouraging pedestrian/cycling activities by making our roads unsafe? Stop building in rural areas and focus housing supply in urban centres.

12. There are also further road safety concerns by the increased traffic volumes at the Sovereign crossroads (intersection of A635/A629). The proposed development (along with the cumulative effect of other developments in the area) will lead to increased traffic volumes attempting to navigate this dangerous junction. It is a known accident blackspot, with a number of known fatalities at this intersection over recent years. Stop the continued development without improvements to road infrastructure.
13. The proposed site is currently used as productive agricultural land. It is untrue to classify this as “poor quality agricultural land” as the developer chooses to imply. The land in question has successfully supported cereal crops in previous recent years and therefore makes an important contribution to UK food security. We are a small island with a decreasing land resource, and should not be building on productive agricultural land which contributes to the UK food supply. It is simply unsustainable to build on agricultural land and replace that production with imported crops from around the world, with the attendant carbon consumption involved and at the whim of global food insecurity.
14. The proposed storm water outfall involves excavating a drainage trench and outfall into the protected ancient woodland of Stephen Wood. This will cause destruction of the woodland in the adjacent area and associated disturbance to habitat. It will also risk pollution to the watercourse with run off from the roads and hardstandings.
15. Since the natural lie of the land falls towards the protected ancient woodland, there is also a very high risk of pollution occurring to the water course of the infant River Dearne during the course of construction from site activities. The site is not suitable for development and places real risk of harm to the ancient woodland and watercourses. It also increases the risk of localised flooding further downstream through Denby Dale and Scissett.
16. The site is also unsuitable for development since there is no natural gravity drainage path for foul water sewerage. The proposed scheme relies on a mechanical pumping station and rising main to pump foul water up to a sewer connection in Barnsley Road. The proposal is then to connect into the existing 225mm dia combined Yorkshire Water public sewer in Barnsley Road. However, in the pre application advice letter from YW (Appendix D Flood Risk assessment), by their own admission, YW state: *“At present the sewer network does not have sufficient available capacity to support the size of development proposed”*. This is evidenced by the common occurrence of the combined sewer network being overwhelmed in high rainfall with manhole covers being lifted and untreated raw sewage being discharged down the road and ultimately into watercourses. The development therefore should be rejected on this basis alone.

In summary, this is another example of creeping development in the rural south Kirklees villages - adjacent to what is supposed to be the highest level of protected ancient woodland and within proximity to a heritage conservation area.

It is in designated green belt land contrary to the adopted Local Plan, and on productive agricultural land.

It is a road safety risk; the transport infrastructure to support it is inadequate; and the sewer network does not have the capacity to deal with the effluent which will be produced.

Along with other developments in the area, its cumulative effect is damaging to the very character of the village of Upper Cumberworth is a threat to a protected environment and its wildlife.

It contravenes numerous published national & Kirklees planning policies and should be refused permission to proceed.