



I object most strongly to this planning application because the site is totally unacceptable for housing. The proposed site is Green Belt land and it fulfils the purpose of that designation. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of plans. Strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period. There are no exceptional circumstances which have been fully evidenced and justified which could justify such a large housing estate being built on Green Belt land at a small village like Upper Cumberworth. There are only 287 dwellings in the village so the proposal would expand the village by 43%, without improving local services and clearly unrelated to the scale of local need.

The site south of Barnsley Road forms a vital part of the rural setting for the Upper Dearne Woodlands, registered as a semi-natural ancient woodland where there has been tree cover since at least 1600. These woods are one of the greatest natural assets of Kirklees and attract many walkers and naturalists, including people using the Dearne Way. The woods are surrounded by open fields which provide an open setting and approach which this application would ruin, especially as viewed from Barnsley Road. Although Barnsley Road runs through Upper Cumberworth, it is important to note that the village is actually aligned along Carr Hill Road and Cumberworth Lane. Barnsley Road serves more as a boundary of the village to the north and south of these roads. The proposed development would be very detrimental to the visual amenity of all those who live nearby or visit the area.

Upper Cumberworth is one of many villages across the south of Kirklees and the Green Belt serves a vital function by preventing suburban sprawl between them and maintaining their distinct identities. Without the Green Belt, Denby Dale, Upper Cumberworth and Shepley could all merge with ribbon development along Barnsley Road. Large new housing sites in this area should be located in the larger settlements which have an adequate range of services and transport links to accommodate the additional population. In terms of school impact I can quote the example of Waverley, a new community in Rotherham built since 2012. The 2021 Census showed 387 children aged 4-10 living in 1,369 new dwellings. Pro rata, 123 new dwellings could result in 35 children of this age for which there would be no room at Upper Cumberworth School which has a total 124 places and is almost full.

This application should be refused on Green Belt grounds alone if Kirklees Council places any value on the policy.