

I grew up in Upper Cumberworth and still visit family there regularly, so I know the character of this landscape well. My objection to this development is based on the clear ecological value of the area and the protections already in place around it.

The proximity of the proposed build to the Upper Dearne woodlands will inevitably impact local wildlife. The woods support a diverse population of deer, , bats, foxes and many other species that rely on this habitat remaining continuous and relatively undisturbed. A housing development on the woodland edge introduces light, noise, traffic and domestic activity that fragments that habitat and gradually displaces wildlife from established territories.

This is particularly concerning given the protected status of the surrounding landscape. Parts of the woodland, including Stephen Wood, are designated ancient woodland with records dating back to the mid-18th century. Under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), ancient woodland is classed as an *irreplaceable habitat*. Once damaged or lost, it cannot realistically be recreated.

Significant sections of the woodland are also protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), which prohibit felling or damage without written consent from the local authority. The proposed removal of established trees in such a sensitive area raises serious concerns about the environmental impact of the scheme.

The site also lies within the South Kirklees Green Belt, where development should be tightly controlled to prevent the gradual erosion of rural landscapes and to protect the character of villages such as Upper Cumberworth. Building on Green Belt land, directly adjacent to protected woodland, runs counter to the purpose of that designation.

The wider ecological context should also not be ignored. The Dearne Valley Wetlands were designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by Natural England in 2021/2022 in recognition of their nationally important bird populations and habitats. Development pressure on the surrounding landscape risks undermining that wider ecological network.

Finally, the woodland is actively managed for conservation. The Upper Dearne Woodlands Conservation Group currently manages around 35 acres for wildlife protection and responsible public access — a clear indication of the recognised ecological importance of this landscape.

Taken together, these protections exist for a reason. Proposing a development of this scale on Green Belt land, involving the felling of established trees and sitting directly beside ancient woodland, demonstrates a lack of understanding of the wider ecological implications.

Until these issues are properly addressed, Kirklees Council should not approve this planning application in its current form.