About the application

Application number: 2025/93572	
What is the application for?:	Outline application with all matters reserved, bar vehicle access into the site,
Address of the site or building:	Land South of, Barnsley Road, Upper Cumberworth, Huddersfield, HD8 8NN
Postcode:	

User comments

Type of comment: An objection	
Do you wish your comments to be published on the website anonymously?	Yes

Planning Objection – Application 2025/60/93572/E

Ecological Grounds – Ancient Woodland and Priority Species

I object to this application on ecological grounds, with specific reference to the presence of the giant hairy wood ant within the adjacent ancient woodland.

1. Irreplaceable Habitat and Natural England Standing Advice
The adjacent woodland is classified as ancient woodland, an irreplaceable habitat protected under paragraph 186 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The NPPF is clear that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of such habitats should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy.

Natural England standing advice reinforces this, requiring strict avoidance of impacts, including indirect effects, and the establishment of appropriate buffer zones. Typically, a minimum buffer of 15 metres is required, though larger buffers are often necessary where protected or priority species are present.
The application fails to demonstrate that such buffers would be sufficient or effective, particularly given the scale of development proposed.

2. Presence of a Priority Woodland Species
The giant hairy wood ant is a nationally scarce species associated with long-established coniferous and mixed woodland. It is listed as a priority species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and is highly sensitive to environmental disturbance, including changes in light, temperature, humidity, and habitat connectivity.

This species relies not only on the woodland itself but also on adjacent land for foraging and colony expansion. The application site is therefore likely to form part of its functional habitat. Development would result in habitat fragmentation and the severing of ecological networks essential for its survival.

3. Indirect Impacts and Ecological Deterioration
The scale and proximity of the proposed development would introduce significant indirect impacts, including:
Increased recreational pressure and trampling
Artificial lighting affecting invertebrate behaviour
Air and noise pollution

Changes to local hydrology and soil conditions
Such impacts constitute “deterioration” under the NPPF and Natural England guidance. For sensitive invertebrate species such as the giant hairy wood ant, even minor environmental changes can lead to colony decline or localised extinction.

4. SSSI-Level Significance and Precautionary Principle
The confirmed presence of a priority species within an ancient woodland ecosystem indicates a high likelihood that the site meets criteria for designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The potential for such designation is a material consideration.

The planning system must apply the precautionary principle where there is uncertainty but risk of significant harm. Allowing development in close proximity to a site of potentially national ecological importance would be contrary to this principle.

5. Conflict with Development Plan Policy
The proposal conflicts with the Kirklees Local Plan Policy LP30, which requires the protection of priority species and the maintenance of ecological networks. It also fails to demonstrate measurable biodiversity net gain, as required by national policy.
Conclusion

The presence of the giant hairy wood ant significantly elevates the ecological sensitivity of this site. The proposed development would result in unacceptable harm to an irreplaceable habitat and a priority species, contrary to the NPPF, Natural England standing advice, and the Kirklees Local Plan.

Planning permission should therefore be refused.