

## **The educational importance of green spaces and woodland**

Submitted by \_\_\_\_\_, resident at \_\_\_\_\_

I am writing to object in the very strongest way about the proposed development by Vivly Living on the land adjacent to Barnsley Road in Upper Cumberworth – planning application number 2025/93572.

My objection is centred around the importance of the green spaces and ancient woodland to the education of children in the village and surrounding areas. There is a long-standing history of the school and children within the village benefiting from the close proximity of green open spaces and the ancient woodland – Stephen Wood. This has transcended the many generations of children in the village and I speak from personal experience about the benefits of these spaces.

During my own childhood, the ancient woodland and green spaces were central to my own education, providing academic, social and emotional benefits as a pupil of Cumberworth First School. As a child I benefited from visits to the woodland with both school and Cumberworth Brownies and as a parent, I was grateful for the replication of these experiences for my own children. I am fearful of the educational impact that any development on the proposed site will bring for future generations of children living in the village. The woodland being adjacent to the development site is at threat as evidenced and supported by the objections of the Woodland Commission and the Tree Officer as well as other professional bodies who state that:

- The proposed buffer is not substantial enough to limit damage to the woodland
- There is threat to protected trees on the development site and those adjacent and on the boundary of the woodland
- Changes to drainage into Stephen Wood would impact the fragile natural environment which exists there – unique species as well as flora and fauna which creates a diverse habitat. Kirklees Council's own Biodiversity Action Plan references 'The Northern Wood Ant (also known as the Hairy Ant) as an internationally important Red Databook Listed species which inhabits Stephen Wood

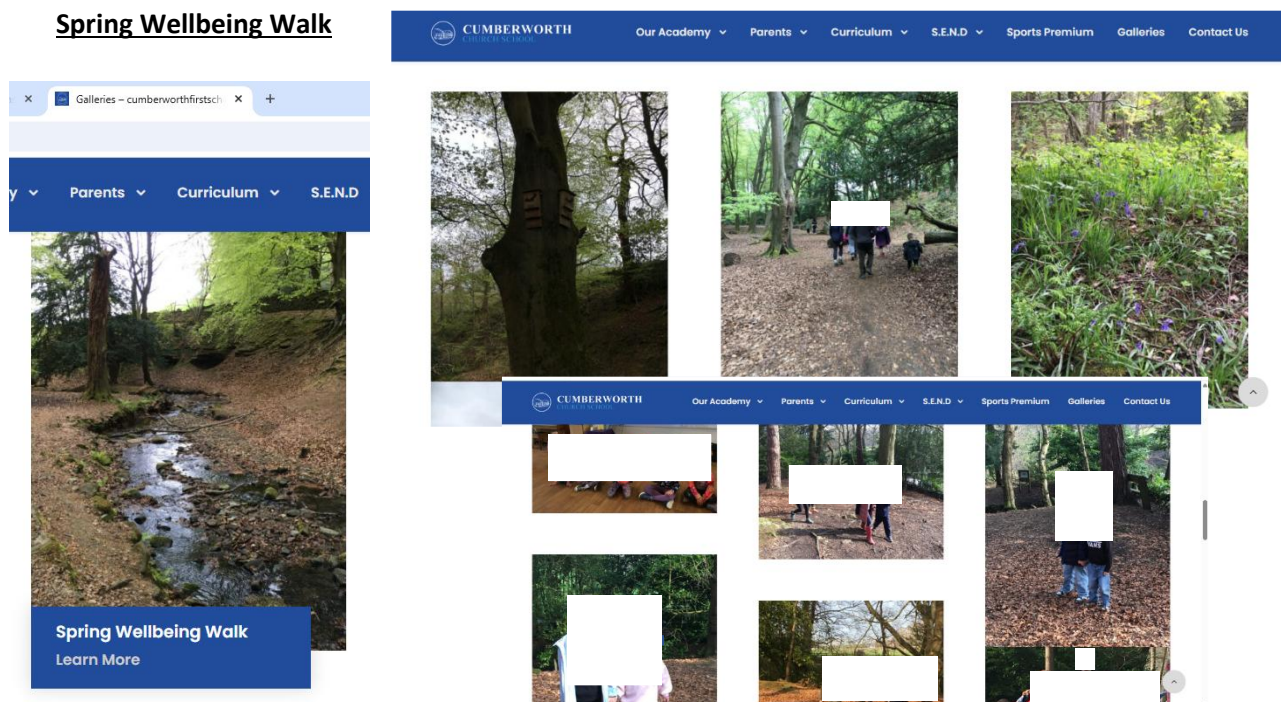
Since my own education, the village school – Cumberworth C of E First School – has continued to use the ancient woodland to benefit the education (academic, social and emotional) of pupils within their care. Within its curriculum statement, the school states that 'The outdoor environment and the local community are considered an opportunity for active learning for all our pupils' the possibility of this to continue and be embedded in future learning of pupils within the village is at threat should the proposed development go ahead.

### **Autumn Learning Walk 2006**

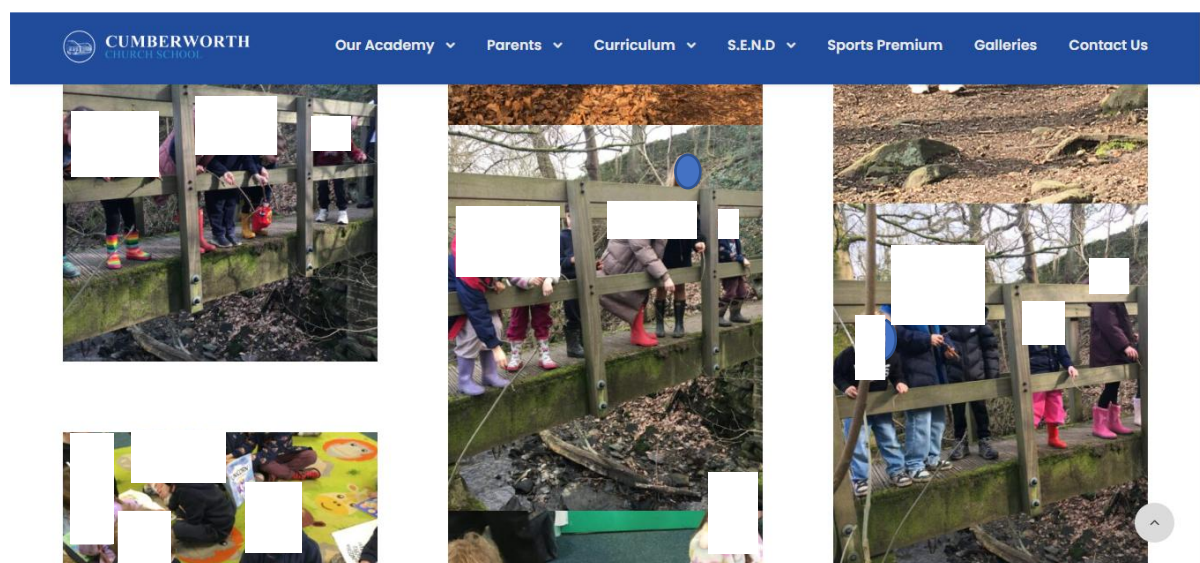


The school's current website shows the huge benefit the school staff and pupils gain from visiting the woodland and surrounding areas during their termly Wellbeing Walks as well as taking their learning into the woods for World Book Day 2026 as evidenced in the photographs below:

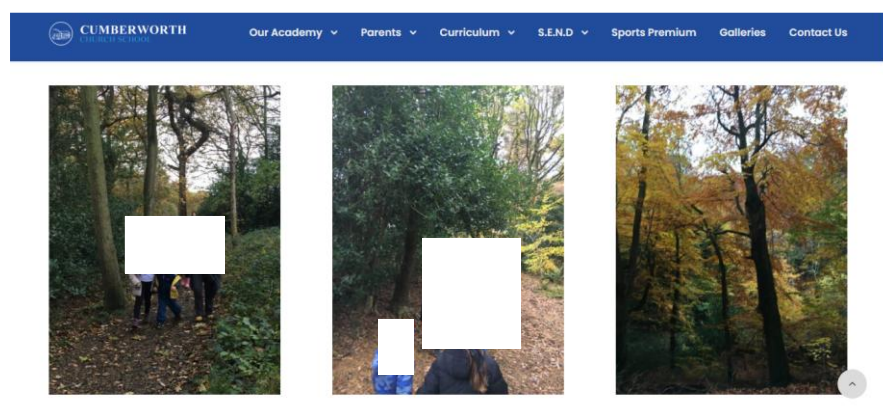
### Spring Wellbeing Walk



### World Book Day experiential learning 2026



### Autumn Wellbeing Walk



## **Key challenges for young people**

Whilst Cumberworth First School place a significant importance on the children on their current roll using the woodland and green spaces, it is likely to become even more important given the current educational concerns for children and young people. It is common knowledge that there has been a rise nationally and globally in poor mental health for children and young people. According to the World Health Organisation:

- 1 in 7 adolescents globally experiences a mental disorder
- anxiety and depression are among the leading causes of illness in young people
- suicide remains one of the leading causes of death for ages 15–29

There are many factors which contribute to this trend, but research suggest that the following strategies support good mental health: unstructured play, exposure to daylight and physical activity. All of these can be promoted with outdoor exposure. This is especially beneficial because it combines: exercise, sunlight, sensory regulation and reduced screen stimulation. Many schools, Cumberworth First School included, are looking at ways in which an active outdoor curriculum can be incorporated into the school timetable. The prime location for such a curriculum focus is Stephen Wood which is at direct threat from any proposed development on the land adjacent to Barnsley Road.

Educational establishments such as Cumberworth First will be supported and encouraged to provide outdoor learning experiences with the introduction of the new curriculum which will become statutory in September 2028 for maintained schools. The new curriculum will likely balance academic outcomes against wellbeing with an acknowledgement that children need to build healthy offline relationships and oracy skills, engage in physical activity and have a sound understanding of climate education and sustainability. Within the remits of climate education and sustainability the new curriculum is likely to feature learning centred on climate science, sustainability, renewable energy, environmental ethics, food systems, biodiversity, sustainable consumption.

When all of these elements are considered, it would seem ludicrous for those with the authority to make planning decisions to entertain any development on the proposed site adjacent to Barnsley Road. I would urge a very close consideration of the viability of the site and the significant and sustained impact this would have on the present and future generations of children within the village and those who benefit from the education that is provided by Cumberworth First School.