

I wish to make Objections and Comments on Application 2026/91763 Land Off Barnsley Road Denby Dale HD8; 40 Dwellings

I am a Denby Dale resident. I have a degree and higher degree in biology, including ecology. I am a member of the Amateur Entomologists' Society.

Wildlife and Ecological Considerations

I am not familiar with the required procedures for Ecological Assessment, but I note that ecological appraisals were carried out on a couple of days during Autumn and Winter months when wildlife was less active. In contrast, I have been observing and recording the wildlife almost daily for a year, and by more than one method.

The first observation to note is that I have detected sounds of bats at night coming from the site, using a Magenta Bat5 detector, although I am not skilled enough to identify species, but probably Pipistrelle. They must be actively foraging there.

For the last five years I have been regularly running a Robinson Mercury Vapour moth trap, previously at my former address in North Shropshire, and for the last year, adjacent to the application site. During this last year, at intervals, I have caught moths of over 60 different species, some in small numbers, others in large quantities – 50+ individuals of a species at a time in some cases. Most notably worth mentioning are Yellow Underwings – Large Yellow, Broad Bordered Yellow, Lesser Broad Bordered - and Dark Arches – all of these extremely numerous. Their caterpillars feed on the roots or leaves of grasses and herbs; this is also the case for other Noctuids, also numerous, for example Heart and Dart, Hebrew Character, and Quaker spp. Numbers of Elephant Hawk Moths have been recorded – their larvae require Willow Herb, which is abundant in the field. Photographs of the moths in the trap are available if requested.

The Habitat Summary of the Ecological Impact Assessment identifies a very wide variety of grasses, herbs and shrubs. In fact, the presence of this great abundance of plants is the very reason for the great variety and number of those moths (and their caterpillars) recorded. Therefore, the vegetation is an important basis of the food chain, and it supports other insects and other invertebrates that will be present in quantity. They are in turn predated upon by a wide variety of small mammals, birds, and bats. The plants themselves also provide seeds and fruits for birds.

Frequently seen perching on the poles and wires in the site are predatory birds, particularly, Kestrel, and also Crows and Magpies. Buzzards are also seen calling and circling above. Evidence of small mammals (seemingly not referred to and not sampled) is also indicated, by local domestic cats which have been observed sitting on the security fencing and stone walls, pouncing and catching small mammals, probably mice and voles. A variety of tits and finches, as well as sparrows and starlings, are also observed foraging in the site. I can confirm that Owls (probably Tawny Owls) can be heard at night calling from the wood.

The Ecological Survey claims that

Development plans at this Site appear unlikely to cause integral loss of roosting, foraging or commuting habitat with an appropriate woodland buffer being established along the edge of Tanner Wood. For this reason, bat emergence and activity surveys have been deemed disproportionate under current plans.

It is clear from my observations that the Site is important for invertebrates, local birds, ground nesting mammals, and bat populations. Removal of the habitat would disadvantage the fauna living in that area, as it is a very accessible food source, and those commuting species referred to would have to forage elsewhere. This is also true for fauna living in the surrounding area of this part of Denby Dale, consisting of hedgerows, woodland, open pasture, and the mature gardens of surrounding developments.

Development of the Site would therefore in fact also result in a loss of foraging well beyond the fauna of Tanner Wood, and the inclusion of a proposed woodland buffer would be irrelevant if the grassland no longer existed after development. I note that one of the Consultees has stated that the proposed woodland buffer is in any case ecologically inadequate.

The Sustainability description that 'The ecological strategy will protect and enhance the biodiversity of existing habitats and ecology' is meaningless given that the existing habitats will be erased.

The implication that the Ancient Woodland Site, and of Tanner Wood, will somehow contribute to the biodiversity of the development, is immaterial, as it is already there, and outside the development area.

Other Considerations

The Site Boundary to the west is adjacent to a public footpath, the existence of which is not included in all the plans. The Habitat Retention Plan shows it as being 'enhanced', with the Landscape Masterplan showing a 'species rich grassland'. It is not clear how this small area can be called that, nor how it will be maintained. It appears that there will be direct access to the footpath from the site from the amenity green space via a 0.45m knee rail. Unless it is properly maintained, the grassland will conceal this rail and create a trip hazard. I would suggest that if the development were approved, provision needs to be made to protect the footpath and give safe access to it both during and after construction.

The Sycamore tree T46 is a medium sized tree next to the footpath, described in the application as twin stemmed. However, on walking past last Winter, I noted that one of the stems is clearly dead, and needs removing, irrespective of the outcome of this Application. If the dead stem was not removed it could be a danger to footpath users, and to children climbing it.

To summarise, the clearance, construction, and ongoing existence of 40 houses on the site will not create a reversible negative impact - it will be a significant irreversible Direct Habitat Loss and deprive the area of another wildlife habitat in both the short and long term.

Conclusion

The application should be refused, and the site maintained and managed as a wildlife habitat. Perhaps it could be linked with the Ancient Woodland Site, and the Kirklees Wildlife Habitat Network. There used to be a mill pond in nearby Churchfield, but it was filled in by development. There is a need for some open water in the immediate area, and a reasonable size pond could be created which could be fed by the nearby Hayley Well Beck if the water flow is sufficient and the topography suitable.