

**JANET:**

Thank you, I respectfully draw the attention of this Committee to the enormous value placed on this particular stretch of countryside by the community of Silsden.

It offers peaceful green space to local families and walkers, and the veteran trees, hedgerows and meadow-lands, contribute greatly to local biodiversity at a moment in history, according to the State of Nature report 2023, when nature has never been so depleted.

Objective 3 of Steeton with Eastburn and Silsden's Neighbourhood Development Plan is "To conserve and enhance the area's natural environment." Paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) describes how policies and decisions "should contribute to and enhance the local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes", and Paragraph 179 says decisions "Should protect and enhance biodiversity". My contention, as a ward councillor, and with over 820 impassioned written statements submitted from my community, is that the Persimmon application goes entirely against the grit and grain of these national and local objectives, while doing little to address the real needs for truly affordable housing on sustainable sites.

### **LANDSCAPE**

An eminent local historian describes the planned development site as "just about the closest Bradford gets to having a Dales settlement within its boundaries ..... This is part of the town's intrinsic character." What mitigation could there possibly be for that? Bradford's own supplementary planning document, 2008, on this area's landscape character, describes a balance of industry, settlement, woodland, and farmland uses throughout Airedale, but adds "this balance could easily be jeopardised by the encroachment of development further up the valley sides." And THAT is exactly what the Persimmon plan is: an encroachment up the valley sides,

### **BIODIVERSITY**

On page 223 of the council's core strategy, within biodiversity and geodiversity policy EN2, is a picture of the curlew, a red-listed bird which has seen a decline in numbers of almost 50% in the past 25 years, mainly through increasing loss of habitat and changing agricultural practises. We have both

curlew and the equally endangered song thrush in our Hawber Cote fields, alongside sightings by Silsden residents of lapwings, woodpeckers, redwings, barn owls, buzzards, and red kites. S106 money is to be requested for the SPM special protected area, only 2.5km from this site. What is the point of spending money there, when foraging land is being taken away from the same species in a neighbouring area?

### **HEDGEROWS AND TREES**

Every ancient hedgerow on this site is continuous throughout the length of the field, and one contains at least 9 species of native trees or shrubs – hawthorn, elder, sycamore, holly, rose, ash, bramble, oak, and alder. Another is mostly holly – now an unusual feature, and very important for wildlife, particularly for winter cover. While some token bits of hedgerow will be kept as garden hedges, none will be continuous corridors valuable to wildlife, and the hedgerows as entities will be destroyed. Paragraph 179 of the NPPF says plans should “safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks”.

### **FOOTPATHS**

A walkway, cut through by housing estate roads, cannot possibly offer a remotely similar experience to that of a centuries old footpath across countryside rich in wildlife. The Rights of Way team acknowledges that there are several exceptionally well used footpaths and tracks within the site. The claimed path from Hawber Cote Drive is not accommodated within the layout. The path shown with a blue line is not referred to on the drawings. The proposals seem to show that walkers would be expected to use part of Footpath Silsden 34 and part of the proposed diversion route of Footpath Silsden 44 as well as a section of estate footway/road as an alternative to the claimed footpath. The legal order required to achieve this would be considered to be a stopping up rather than a diversion. These paths are linked to ancient field boundaries, connecting Silsden to the former medieval manors of Swartha and Brunthwaite. Core Strategy EN4 states “Identified landscape character is considered to be a key component of local distinctiveness that helps to create a ‘sense of place’. It is difficult to overstate the significance and meaning of these footpaths to local people, who find a powerful sense of place and rooted identity here.

**This housing development would destroy an iconic landscape, reduce biodiversity, and deprive local people of the health benefits of this very special place. Before making this decision, I would urgently ask members of the committee to come and walk the footpaths of Hawber Cote Fields for themselves.**