



## **CORE DOCUMENT K.5.2**

Planning appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/20/3244389

Cold Law, Stiddlehill Common, near Ridsdale, Ray Estate, Northumberland

Construction of a publicly accessible landmark commissioned to  
commemorate Queen Elizabeth II and the Commonwealth

### **Summary Proof of Anne Palmer on behalf of 'Keep the Wannies Wild' (KTWW)**

February 2021

1. I speak for the almost 2000 members of the KTWW group, people passionate and motivated enough to join a group, to engage with its operation, and to endorse my appearance here to voice their fervent objections to the proposal. Local people have been forced to spend their time and resources writing three lots of objection letters, even when the process for doing so has been frustrating. That they have written the over 400 separate, personal and passionate objections you have read is testament to the strength of their opposition. I cannot read or summarise them all, but each and every one tells a genuinely held tale of love for the Wannies and a plea that it not be despoiled.
2. The views of the notable objectors I have drawn to your attention should be given particular weight, especially where they write on behalf of members and colleagues. The closest relatives of Sir Charles Parsons do not wish to see his name associated with a proposal he would have hated. The letters of support are by contrast, copy-and-paste efforts that at best, do not convince, and at worst, insult and misrepresent. Few of the writers would know the area, and fewer still have provided any original explanation for their views. Their letters should therefore be accorded little weight.
3. Northumberland's democratic institutions are against this proposal. Our local MP, Guy Opperman, has expressed his disapproval. Five Parish Councils actively object, while none are in favour. Parish Councils are the democratic expression of our rural opinion and represent the views and interests of people living in the large geographic area affected.
4. Northumberland County Council refused planning permission for this application but only after members had questioned the quality of evidence initially submitted, made a site visit and then carried out lengthy and pertinent discussions. Their decision was not unreasonable nor weakly based. It took into account relevant material not available at an earlier stage and was made conscientiously by our democratic representatives. Many, many people successfully recorded their objections through the designated legal procedures. The people have spoken clearly.
5. The appellant's *Statement of Community Engagement* (CD D.4) is poorly explained, its methodology unclear, and its propositions "loaded". Its few participants seem to have no knowledge of the Wannies area, making their opinions worthless when balanced against the objections. What it terms "community engagement" has made no reference to the democratic process or to any relevant representative group, local residents or business owners. It has ignored the Hexham Courant poll,

demonstrating the appellant's perverse determination to fly in the face of public opinion. Mr Atkinson-Evans speaks confidently of a "silent majority" in favour of the appellant's plans, but as yet, the appellant's attempts at community engagement have been unable either to locate them or give them voice.

6. In my opinion the development would be severely damaging to the landscape character and appearance because of its height, form and materials. It would be an alien intrusion into a sweeping, open landscape. Associated activity would harm the sense of remoteness which is such an important part of the area's character and, crucially, an attraction for visitors.
7. My experience, and the testimony of others, is that people who love the Wannies as they are will patronise local businesses, principally for accommodation and refreshments. Their trade would be lost if they no longer came here and any suggestion that it might be replaced by monument spotters is unevidenced and highly speculative. Nothing could be done to mitigate this impact. 'Ascendant' would be impossible to ignore and would be there in perpetuity, damage done.
8. This remote and sparsely populated area with little infrastructure is not the right location for this type of development. There is overwhelming evidence of objection and no support that is not tainted by the influence of the appellant.