



## **CORE DOCUMENT K.6**

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

**Proof of Emma Anderson BA (Hons)**  
**on behalf of 'Keep the Wannies Wild' (KTWW)**

February 2021

1. I hold the degree of BA (Hons) in Criminal Justice Studies from Northumbria University. I am a native of Northumberland. For 26 years I was Director of Victim Support in North Tyneside and Blyth Valley. I developed innovative services and management systems, including the first computerised victim management system in the UK. For twelve months at the end of my career, I was Company Secretary to Victim Support Northumbria, a Charitable Company with a £1.2m budget. I participated in inter-agency work with the Home Office and other criminal justice agencies and was an advocate on behalf of victims with the Criminal Injury Compensation Authority. I moved to Otterburn in November 2003 prior to my retirement in April 2004.
2. In 1996, while still working for Victim Support, I researched and launched a bird watching holiday business in Northumberland, was a member of the Northumbria Tourist Board and gained a Welcome Host qualification. Sadly, ill health forced me to close that business but I have continued a life-long interest in natural history and photography. After retiring to Otterburn, I served as Otterburn Parish Clerk for three years and was a committee member of the Redesdale Society and Otterburn Memorial Hall. I have written the *Redesdale Village Notes* column in the Hexham Courant for 16 years and publish a free, weekly, local e-newsletter circulated to 199 subscribers; this writing keeps me fully in touch with local people. When hen harriers last bred on the Wannies, in the summer of 2006 or 2007, I was part of a considerable voluntary effort, organised by the RSPB, to warden the site.
3. My proof includes comments submitted by members of the KTWW group to illustrate important points. Full copies of those letters are in Appendices A-H. Numbered appendices are from the KTWW Statement of Case (CD K.2)
4. My proof will cover the following topics:
  - The committee meetings that I attended
  - The iconic cultural importance of the Wannies area
  - My personal opinion about the impact on landscape character and appearance
  - Effect on existing tourism businesses

### **The committee meetings**

5. I was present at the Strategic Planning Committee meetings on 4 June and 2 July 2019. I spoke at the latter and confirm that the contemporaneous notes in Appendix 1 of CD K.2 are a fair summary of what was said. The councillors had made a site inspection that morning and at the meeting they asked pertinent questions of the Head of Planning. They took time to make a careful decision and I do not consider

that they acted hastily, without sufficient information or unreasonably in refusing planning permission.

### **The iconic cultural importance of the Wannies area**

6. The Wannies is an iconic area, not only for its wild and open landscape but for its literary and musical associations and its popularity, to say nothing of the well-used Northumberland figure of speech "*The Wilds of Wanney*". Appendix 2 of CD K.2 is a published Miscellany which I compiled; a collection of cultural references to the Wannies, including literature, music, wildlife, walking and rock climbing, with quotes showing the depth of feeling of those who have written about their opposition to the appeal proposal.
7. The objection from the British Mountaineering Council (App. H) speaks of the importance of Great Wanney Crag to generations of climbers. Members consider the Crag and its environs "*a special place worthy of our protection*" (Steve Blake in the Miscellany, Appendix 2 of CD K.2). Photographs at Appendix 10 of CD K.2 show that the full height of 'Ascendant' would be visible, above forestry, from the Crag. In his objection to the appeal, Climber Martin Bewick (App. B) says:

*The sense of remoteness as you look North from the top of Great Wanney Crag was, and still is, an integral part of the Wannies climbing experience. The structure will deprive every aspiring young climber of that experience forever.*

8. There are many rights of way in the Wannies, making the area popular with walkers and cyclists. There is open access land around Cold Law and long-distance walking and cycle routes nearby. See photos in Appendix 10 of CD K.2 and map of the Lisles Burn walk in Appendix 11 of CD K.2.
9. "*The Wilds of Wanney*" is a well-known Northumberland saying, even amongst families who have never been there (see quotations in The Miscellany, Appendix 2 of CD K.2). Allyson Jervis (App. C) in her objection writes:

*I grew up in Newcastle upon Tyne in the 1960s and even then, as a child I was aware of 'The Wilds of Wanney' as it was an oft used phrase...to describe a remote and wild place.*

10. The iconic WILD character of the Wannies landscape is widely loved by those who know it. The space and tranquillity provide mental and physical refreshment and being there is a significant health benefit. The appeal proposal would destroy the sense of remoteness that I, and others, experience in this landscape and have other impacts in terms of disturbance and activity, harming the restorative quality of the environment.

11. It is not only walkers who appreciate the area; drivers do too. For example, in his objection to the application Guy Thouret (App. D) writes:

*As you mount the crest, the panorama that is Redesdale and beyond to the Scottish Border and Cheviot Hills is laid out before you and it is breathtaking. (see photos in Appendix 10 of CD K.2).*

In a similar vein, Jane Daghish (App. E) in her objection writes:

*The views as you pass the site of the proposal at Cold Law is amazing – you can see the Scottish border hills in the distance and a lovely wild countryside all around you.*

### **My personal opinion about the impact on landscape character and appearance**

12. The Poet Kathleen Partridge, in her poem 'Smiling along', writes:

*Roaming the byways outside the great city,  
The sky seems too large for my little concerns.  
Worries are lost in the green of the landscape,  
A sense of well-being and wonder return.*

To be stopped in one's tracks by the sight of a majestic landscape or to return, again and again, to a much-loved viewpoint is part of the human condition. The landscape, seen on foot, through the windscreen of my car or the viewfinder of my camera provides me with Kathleen Partridge's same sense of well-being, wonder and rejuvenation. Living in Otterburn, I regularly have to travel across the area and, from the A68 above West Woodburn, 'Ascendant' would be prominent during each journey. I share the view expressed by many objectors that 'Ascendant' would be a "blot on the landscape". For those walking, climbing or pursuing other quiet countryside activities, 'Ascendant' would be seen in the view for hours on end, not just a passing moment. Vehicles in the car park, the activity of events proposed and the lack of toilets would all damage the environment.

13. 'Ascendant' would look huge, overbearing and stridently industrial in character. For me, its tilted form resembles a shipyard crane. Unlike the nearby wind turbines, which at least are temporary and serve a useful purpose, 'Ascendant' would not sit well within the landscape and would stand out against the sky. Nobody seeing 'Ascendant' would have any idea of what it was meant to represent. The associated activity would harm the wild and tranquil character, which is highly appreciated by residents and visitors.
14. Cold Law, or Tit Hill as it is known locally, and as referred to by Councillor Riddle in the minutes to the 4 June 2019 committee meeting (CD C.2), has existed in its present form since, probably, the Ice Age. It will be cut in half before the construction of 'Ascendant'. Some 1150 cubic metres of

350-million-year-old rock will be removed for no useful purpose other than to be crushed and used as hardcore for the car park and surrounding footpaths. Then, as if to add insult to this injury, an aggressive-looking, rusting steel spike will be thrust into its heart and anchored in countless tons of concrete. This idea fills me with horror and the carbon emissions of the steel and concrete would be enormous, not to mention those of car-borne visitors. The originators of the design may not have thought of it in this way but if you love this landscape, as I do, you cannot help seeing these earthworks, and the construction of 'Ascendant', as an act of violence and mutilation.

### **Effect on existing tourism businesses**

15. The objection letters from several local businesses make it clear that this development would damage them. The area already has its own brand of tourism which relies on the beauty, tranquillity and remoteness of the landscape and its natural and cultural history. The disruption and visual intrusion of the lengthy construction activities alone would in themselves damage a whole year of tourism in the area. Existing visitors have said they would go elsewhere if the scheme went ahead and my local knowledge supports that view.
16. Mary Ann Rogers, a local artist and owner of a nearby commercial gallery, writes in her objection to the appeal (App. F):

*(if consulted) I could have explained that the wildlife and landscape paintings, so closely connected to this part of Northumberland, are what my visitors are interested in.*

17. Wildlife is an important component of the local tourism offer and I write in The Miscellany (Appendix 2 of CD K.2) about the hen harriers that some years ago nested at Aid Moss. I was one of the residents involved in wardening them. We were privileged to see the male bird acrobatically passing its prey to the female in mid-air, a sight that I described as 'one of the finest spectacles in all of nature'. This is the type of attraction that brings visitors to the Wannies area. David Baines (App. G) writes:

*I recall the peace over the Wannies while watching over the birds. The sight of peregrines, hen harriers and buzzards aloft at the same time almost needed air traffic control. It was wonderful. In the case of the hen harriers, the sense of community pride in having one of the very few nests in England was also quite something.*

The Wannies provides the kind of upland location and food source preferred by these rare birds. The Miscellany reminds us that the north-east is now the most consistent breeding location for hen harriers in England. Their recent success in Northumberland has been dependant on the support of a partnership of conservation groups, the Forestry

Commission, Northumberland National Park Authority and Northumbria Police. With this level of support in future, and without disturbance from the public, there is no reason why hen harriers should not return to breed on the Wannies. The thrill of watching them, and observing their behaviour, will bring pleasure and delight to local people and visitors alike and will only add to their pride in their shared and beautiful landscape.

18. The appeal proposal would not only scar the landscape that I love but would also create disturbance, vehicle noise, fumes and litter which would deter wildlife. I have experience running a guided bird-watching business and know from my continued interest that nothing has essentially changed over time as to what customers are looking for. They require undisturbed viewing, local knowledge, access to special sites and reliability of organisation. 'Ascendant' with its consequent traffic and activity would put them off visiting this area and would certainly prevent the hen harriers from returning, even though Northumberland is an area in which they are now prospering.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

19. I attended both committee meetings and spoke on 2 July when councillors resolved to refuse planning permission. They had made a site visit, asked many questions and had a reasoned discussion. I consider that their decision was soundly based in line with their democratic duties.
20. I compiled the *Miscellany* which demonstrates that The Wanney area is iconic culturally and highly valued by those who live there or visit for recreation. Its landscape is very sensitive, such that this man-made intrusion would be highly damaging.
21. The damage done to Cold Law itself would be upsetting and 'Ascendant' would be seen by those living in and visiting the wider area. The construction activities would be disruptive. Its final visual impact would be colossal and overbearing from closer viewpoints that are popular with walkers, climbers and naturalists. The effect on landscape character and appearance would be severely damaging because of the structure's height, tilted form and industrial materials. It would affect users of the countryside for hours on end not just via fleeting glimpses.
22. As well as being unsustainable, the activity from the development would discourage wildlife which is an attraction for existing visitors. This would harm the existing tourist businesses in the area which rely on the beauty, tranquillity and remoteness of the landscape and its natural and cultural history.

## **APPENDICES**

These are full copies of representations sent to NCC or PINS and quoted in my proof.

- A. Emma Anderson
- B. Martin Bewick
- C. Allyson Jervis
- D. Guy Thouret
- E. Jane Daglish
- F. Mary Ann Rogers
- G. David Baines
- H. Simon Litchfield for British Mountaineering Council