

3.2 Why do you feel the property is an asset of community value? Please give as much information as possible.

The current re-wilding of the Mytholm Works site is a source of social wellbeing for the local community

There are several ways in which the local community derives social wellbeing from the current use of the Mytholm Works site, which has been left to re-wild for years, since the closure of Mytholm Works.

Many local people speak of their appreciation of the re-wilding green space. It provides a sense of wellbeing for people who describe the site as a breathing space, or lung, that helps clear the air pollution created by heavy traffic on the A646. Local people also talk about the pleasure they take in the variety of wildlife - including bats, birds, bees, butterflies, small mammals, frogs and deer - that the site provides a habitat for.

The social wellbeing that comes from being close to green spaces isn't limited to conscious enjoyment. There is also evidence from hospitals ⁽¹⁾ that when people can see green spaces, they enjoy quicker recoveries and better health than those who can't.

A quick look at the field shows how many desire paths enter and cross it – paths made by people repeatedly walking where they like. So people clearly also value it as a space for walking. But with a prominent red-letter sign saying Danger Trespassers KEEP OUT, it's going to be hard for people to say that being *in* the Mytholm Works site contributes to their wellbeing.

Photographs suggest that some of the people who've made the desire paths are children and teenagers who use the field as a kind of unofficial adventure playground: lighting and building small fires; using the hard surfaces for wheelie sports - maybe cycling, or skateboarding or inline skating; and painting graffiti and tag art on the walls.

Some adults may disapprove, but this is the kind of unsupervised, outdoor play in contact with nature that all too often today, children and young people never experience. To their loss and detriment.

In Britain today, only 21% of children regularly play outside, compared with 71% of their parents when they were children. The area in which children may roam without supervision has decreased by almost 90% since 1970. 11- to 15-year-olds in Britain now spend, on average, half their waking day in front of a screen. In this context, it seems undoubted that children's and teenagers' unsupervised play on Brown's Field is an important source of social wellbeing.

There is a growing body of evidence ⁽²⁾ *“that it's not so much what children know about nature that's important, as what happens to them when they are in nature (and not just in it, but in it by themselves, without grownups). Respectable scientists – doctors, mental health experts, educationalists, sociologists – are beginning to suggest that when kids stop going out into the natural world to play, it can affect not just their development as individuals, but society as a whole.”*

The idea of “nature deficit disorder” has emerged to describe what happens to our children and young people, growing up indoors, or in supervised activities, or in front of screens.

The need to remedy this situation is borne out by the health and other benefits of time spent in free, unstructured play in the natural world – a free-range childhood.

Academic and scientific studies show that these benefits include mental wellbeing and self-esteem, as well as better problem-solving skills, focus and self-discipline. Socially, free-range play in the natural world improves cooperation, flexibility, and self-awareness. Emotional benefits include reduced aggression and increased happiness. In 2005 the American Medical Association published a study that concluded "*Children will be smarter, better able to get along with others, healthier and happier when they have regular opportunities for free and unstructured play in the out-of-doors,*"

Studies also show ⁽³⁾ that children's games are more creative in green places than in concrete playgrounds.

Geographer Marion Shoard has written ⁽⁴⁾ that edgelands may be unloved or ignored by official planners and those who like landscapes that conform to ideas of the picturesque, but they provide rich habitats for a biodiverse range of plants and wildlife, and valuable opportunities for young people's unofficial adventure playgrounds, as well as other social benefits.

Ryedale Council has recognised these benefits in preserving a brownfield site (that used to be an airfield) as Clifton Backies ⁽⁵⁾ nature reserve.

For all these reasons, the re-wilding of Brown's Field is a source of social wellbeing for people in Mytholm.

This use of the land will continue to further the social well-being or interests of the local community

Using the Community Right to Bid, Incredible Edible Mytholm would enhance the re-wilding value of the site through employing permaculture and aquaculture food growing methods that work with, rather than against, wild habitats and wildlife. It would also explore ways of enhancing biodiversity through the use of green walls ⁽⁶⁾ on buildings.

While protecting the site's natural re-wilding, Incredible Edible Mytholm's aim is to develop the site as a sustainable, intensive, community food-growing business, including a farm gate retail market for locally-produced food, sustainable food growing apprenticeships and education, and an eco-tourist attraction with an eco-hotel.

This development will contribute to social wellbeing through preserving the site as a re-wilding green space, or informal nature reserve, that will continue to provide a natural, outdoor, unstructured play space for children and young people. Children (and adults) in the area have told Incredible Edible Mytholm members that they would like to be able to use the site in this way. The proposed development will also maintain the wellbeing that comes from seeing nearby green spaces.

It will further the cultural and recreational interests of the community, by building on the area's heritage of cooperative businesses, attracting green tourism and providing a space where local people of all ages, as well as visitors, can learn about food growing and reduce the current "nature deficit disorder".

The example of Incredible Edible Todmorden (IET) shows how effectively community food growing contributes to social wellbeing. Incredible Edible Mytholm's plan to develop the site as a community food growing business is inspired by IET's example and is also in line with Calderdale's Incredible Edible and Community Growing policy. This states that: the Council should continue to support community growing projects wherever possible, and feasible community growing opportunities should be reflected in the development of an Asset Register for Calderdale as required by the Localism Act 2011.

Outdoor work and food growing contribute to social wellbeing in a variety of ways. These include:

- improved mental health
- improved healthy eating
- more exercise
- social inclusion
- access to green spaces

There is convincing evidence that social wellbeing is greater in societies where there is low income inequality - without extremes of low and high pay. Incredible Edible Mytholm would further the social wellbeing of Hebden Bridge through providing well-paid, skilled jobs that would have a significant multiplier effect in the South Pennine economy and would contribute to a fair, sustainable local economy. The development would create a range of skilled jobs - not only in permaculture and aquaculture intensive food growing, but also in food retail, eco-building, running an eco-hotel and tourist attraction, and in education and training.

The York Fairness Commission, set up by York Council to investigate how the Council can reduce social inequalities and increase fairness in York, has recommended that the Council should "make York a Living Wage City and inspire Yorkshire to become a Living Wage Region".⁽⁷⁾ Through its creation of well paid, skilled jobs, Incredible Edible Mytholm's development of the Mytholm Works site would be a step on the way to making Hebden Bride a Living Wage Town.

c) *Furthering the social wellbeing and interests of the community will be the primary use of the site*

Furthering the social wellbeing and interests of the community will be the primary use of the site. These goals will drive the community food business.

In her recent Portas Review of how to support high street businesses, Mary Portas recommends⁽⁸⁾ that Councils should "Support imaginative community use of empty properties through Community Right to Buy...". Locality⁽⁹⁾, a UK organisation that supports groups who wish to use the Community Right to Bid, endorses this recommendation, stating that "*Evidence from the Asset Transfer Unit suggests that many community assets are already used to support enterprise activities and new businesses. The recently published Portas Review⁽¹⁰⁾ an independent review into the demise of high streets and town centres across England- supports this view and promotes the use of the Right to Bid to empower communities to stimulate local economic growth.*"

Upward pressures on food prices will continue to make food an increasingly important employment sector - and where it comes from, a hot topic.

Veg tourism in Todmorden is proving to be a national and international draw, with several hundred visitors this year taking guided tours of the town's green route.

The eco hotel would be an important source of income for the site, while the re-wilding, food growing, and related educational and recreational activities would be the unique selling point for the hotel - emulating Cornwall's Eden Project and tying together all the innovative food and growing-related activities in the valley.

The design of the eco hotel would embody and demonstrate low carbon, sustainable building methods. It would absorb and passively store solar heat energy and include a rainwater harvesting system that would irrigate south-facing growing areas outside the rooms - including biodiversity green walls and edible green screens. (These would be , planted wild plants selected to support the site's biodiversity and with food plants, respectively.)

Integrating sustainable food growing, retail, outdoor play, education, training and eco-tourism, Incredible Edible Mytholm community food business would help Hebden Bridge to shift towards a sustainable, low carbon, living wage economy with low income inequality, that would be in line with Calderdale's Energy Future vision. It would further social wellbeing and the cultural and recreational interests of the community.

References/ supporting evidence

- 1) <http://nhsforest.org/evidence> and <http://www.minnesotamedicine.com/PastIssues/March2008/ClinicalMitrioneMarch2008/tabid/2488/Default.aspx>
- 2) www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2010/aug/16/childre-nature-outside-play-health
- 3) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/nov/19/children-lose-contact-with-nature>
- 4) <http://www.marionshoard.co.uk/Documents/Articles/Environment/Edgelands-Remaking-the-Landscape.pdf>
- 5) <http://www.cliftonbackies.org.uk/home.html>
- 6) <http://www.energyroyd.org.uk/archives/6046> Inspiration for proposed eco-hotel
- 7) http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/bhcc/living_wage_commission/Living_Wage_Commission_Report_Final.pdf and <http://www.jrf.org.uk/media-centre/living-wage>
- 8) <http://www.maryportas.com/news/2011/12/12/my-28-recommendations/>
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