Appendix 2 – Detailed account of the formal objections to the proposals

Removal of healthy trees.
Two of the objectors disagree with the need to remove healthy trees and are also concerned by the number of trees proposed for removal. The objectors felt that this is a natural environment, that these proposals are interference by Man in natural processes and that nature should be allowed to take its course. One of the objectors also disputed the claim that the woodland was too dark and 'liked the woodland just as it is'.

Response.
This is an ancient woodland site, meaning that woodland has been growing here for over 400 years. However, the woodland cover that is here today is entirely a creation of human intervention following clear felling and replanting in the early 1900s. If a natural environment the woodland would contain a mix of tree species including oak, birch, rowan and hazel, but not beech. The woodland would also have trees of all ages from seedlings to very old veteran trees. As a direct consequence of human intervention over the last 100 years the trees are predominantly all the same species and age. If allowed to take its natural course trees would begin to die at the same time with no young ones to provide replacements. This would be detrimental to amenity, landscape and wildlife.

All plants need sufficient light and room to grow and it is a direct consequence of the very low light levels that there are no young trees, shrubs or any ground flora over much of the site. Increased light levels will be necessary to encourage establishment of young trees, shrubs and ground flora. Providing the necessary light levels will involve the removal of up to 20% of tree stems. Whilst this may sound like a high number, many of the trees to be felled are tall and thin and that, on an individual basis, take up very little space. Removing fewer trees would not create the desired conditions. The larger trees with the biggest stems and canopies will be retained.

Use of natural regeneration rather than planting to secure replacement trees
This objection was on the grounds that no replacement planting would take place and that because natural regeneration would be relied upon the old beech trees would be replaced with young beech trees rather than native species.

It is true that beech will regenerate naturally from seed as light levels increase. However, because there are presently no young trees of any species over much of the site the priority is that the next generation of trees is established without delay. An element of beech will be acceptable as part of a mix of new trees, and would not be detrimental to the woodland.

There are some mature oak and ash trees around the woodland that will provide a source of seeds, allowing these species to establish as well. Natural regeneration is also a very cost effective way to replace trees because there is no cost involved with buying the trees and they are much less likely to be vandalised.

The woodland is protected by a tree preservation order
One objector felt that because the woodland was protected by a tree preservation order it should be safe from felling.

Tree preservation orders are intended to protect trees and woodlands that are under threat from poor management. The order was made on this woodland when it was privately owned and vulnerable due to proposed development in the area. The protection is not intended to preclude responsible management. This work will improve the long term prospects of the woodland, improve opportunities for wildlife and is supported by Forestry Commission and Forest Stewardship Council.

Inappropriate use of resources
Whilst a proportion of the timber from the operations will be sold to meet some of the costs of the work the value will be insufficient to generate a net income for the authority. Therefore, one objector felt that this was inappropriate use of authority's valuable resources.

Response
The difference in value between the timber and the value of the work will be met by a grant from Forestry Commission. This particular source of grant was created in recognition of the need to introduce management to woodlands like this to protect their long term viability.

Management of the woodland edge next to The Dell and Green Bank Drive
The third objector lives on the edge of the woodland and was concerned that the coppicing work would remove tree cover, opening up clear views of the resident's property from the woodland.

Response
A separate meeting was held with the resident to discuss this matter specifically. The trees to be coppiced in the area behind this property were identified and agreed with the resident. The resident had no objection to this proposal following the meeting.

Inadequate wildlife survey
The objectors felt that there has been insufficient survey of the woodland's wildlife. For this reason they feel that the authority is unable to substantiate the claims that this work will benefit wildlife.

Response

The Council's Biological Records Centre holds records for the woodland from 1931 to 2012, with 583 species recorded and 2900 individual records held.

Rotherham District Ornithological Society (RDOS) members have consistently visited the site over the last decade. This has established an excellent representation of the bird species that are present and breeding. Management can be undertaken outside the main nesting season to prevent any harm and disturbance

In the 1970s and 1980s a significant amount of invertebrate survey work took place. The woodland has not changed in structure since that time and it is reasonable to assume that species recorded then are likely to continue to be present and frequent survey would not therefore be necessary. However, it may be useful to undertake similar survey work in the next couple of years to provide a comparison. This has been recognised in the plan and two invertebrate surveys, together with two ground flora surveys and two bird surveys are included in the programme, one of each in year 1 and again in year 5.

In terms of legally protected species, dormice are not recorded anywhere in the borough of Rotherham, sand lizard and smooth snake are confined to the south of England, badgers are not recorded and there is no evidence of their presence in the woodland. Great crested newt is not recorded in the woodland. The habitats present in and around the woodland would not be considered to be attractive to reptile and amphibian species in any case. Furthermore, reptiles are highly mobile and (if present) woodland management can be planned to encourage movement into, rather than out of, the main woodland habitats. A comprehensive, independent bat survey of the whole woodland will be completed prior to any works commencing. This is standard practice.

Further to the information available for the site, the woodland in its current form will only support a limited range of wildlife. The increase in dead wood, shrubs and ground flora that the work will secure will enhance the current habitat and widen the habitat range available to species. For example, the increased provision of dead wood will enhance the invertebrate numbers that support the bird species recorded by RDOS.

National and international standards for woodland habitat such as United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standard, the auditing document for Forest Stewardship Council certification, The United Kingdom Forestry Standard by Forestry Commission, and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) all recommend greater diversity of habitat than is currently available at Silver Wood.