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Second Open Letter to Clive Betts MP Office 1B, G2
Leeds Road
Sheffield S9 3TY

Date: 24th August 2023

Dear Clive Betts MP,

Thank you for your email Dated: 23rd August 2023. I had not publicised your response as I believe you have not addressed any of the major points I made. Please re-read my open letter dated: 22nd March 2023.

Facts Matter

~~Before printing~~ extracts from this map, I took great care to investigate.

<https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/HigherLevelStewardshipAgreementMap.pdf> The map shows Owlthorpe Grassland & Grazing Project, and the important areas of maintenance of Hedgerows, Ditches, Grassland and Wetlands that are of very high environmental Value.

Under the freedom of information act I requested maps and payment structures from Rural Payments Agency regarding Higher Level Stewardship Agreements between Sheffield City Council and Natural England from 2012 to 2022. This is their answer:

“31 March 2022 Our Ref: RFI 6137 Dear Michael Meredith, Environmental Information Regulations – Information Request We refer to your email dated 3 March, which we have dealt with under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). You have asked for payments and maps relating to Environmental Stewardship agreement(s) for a specific council from 2012 to present. Please find the information you have requested in the attached annexes. Due to the size of the documents, we will send this over three emails in eight annexes. Yours sincerely Information Rights Team Rural Payments Agency | Eden Bridge House | Carlisle | CA3 8DX Tel: 03300 416502 | Fax: 03300 416574 | Email: irt@rpa.gov.uk Follow us on Twitter @Ruralpay”

The payment structure shows that Sheffield City Council have been receiving Government funds for the conservation and maintenance of Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail. Evidence I provided to Inspector O S Woodwards shows that many City Councils have cut back on the maintenance of parks and open spaces. I highlighted the main points in yellow: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/EO-14NicolaDempysustainability-11-00360-v2.pdf> Evidence suggests that although Sheffield City Council have been receiving Government funds for the Maintenance of Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail, this has not taken place. The whole area has been left to re-Wilden, for example: My wife and I had to cut the brambles from around the ancient 3way stone stile before we were able to take a picture. The wetlands opposite Edenthorpe are completely overgrown and the Hedgerows look more like poplar trees.

Facts Matter

~~I attended~~ the S H E F F I E L D C I T Y C O U N C I L South East Local Area Committee Meeting held 11 January 2023. PRESENT: Councillors Karen McGowan (Chair), Kurtis Crossland, Tony Downing, Bryan Lodge, Bob McCann, Kevin Oxley, Gail Smith, and Ann Woolhouse. Please read my extracts taken from minutes of the meeting: I asked many questions of Simon Vincent. Please read Questions and answers: Full version is available from Sheffield South East (LAC) <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/PlanningObjections12thApril2023.pdf>

"7. DRAFT SHEFFIELD PLAN 7.1 The Committee received a presentation from Simon Vincent, Strategic Planning and Service Manager, Planning Service, on progress regarding the Draft Sheffield Plan. Mr Vincent reported on the aims and objectives of the Plan, which would replace the Sheffield Core Strategy (2009) and the Unitary Development Plan (1998), how the Plan would affect southeast Sheffield. There was confusion about the size of plot F as both plot E and plot F look to be about the same size. Many visitors asked the question: how can you fit 150 properties into plot F when it is only the same size as plot E with only 74 houses?"

Facts Matter

Clive, Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail was opened with an official event on March 16th 2012 by children from three local primary schools assisted by David Caufield - Sheffield City Council officer, **Clive Betts MP for Sheffield South East** and Sheffield City Councillor Helen Mirfin-Boukouris. Please zoom into the interpretation Boards: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/Interpritation.htm> in the [Morehole Lane Trail Entrance](#) Board there is a photo of the opening event. On [Owlthorpe Grassland Grazing Project](#) Board, between 1980 and 2002 Sheffield Lost 75.5% of its unimproved grasslands, therefore our grasslands are a valuable environmental resource. The project's objective is to manage our grasslands and safeguard the wildflowers and wildlife for future generations to enjoy. The grazing project is part of a programme of strategic planting to link up the green corridors of Sheffield.

Well-managed hedgerows are not just field boundaries but are among our richest wildlife habitats. The mixture of shrubs and trees offer food and cover for a wide variety of animals, including birds, beetles, butterflies, mice and voles. Some species spend their entire life in the hedgerow, some only eat there, some sleep there and some shelter while passing through, using the hedge as a green corridor.

Clive, Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail is a wildlife sanctuary, the clue is in the name Nature Trail. The grasslands are a major component. Residents of Owlthorpe are at a loss to understand why both yourself and Sheffield City Council want to destroy our Oasis. Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature trail is a project that both yourself and Sheffield City Council should be proud of.

Clive, please read this: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/EO-20roundtableeventregardinghousingsupply.pdf>

"Inspector O S Woodward wished to sort out legal matters and requested Richard Sager, Barrister acting for Avant Homes cross examine Guy Williams, Barrister acting for Sheffield City Council. Many matters were resolved, but Avant Homes wanted reassurances that before they started to build on Site (E) that they would be able to build on site C and D at a later date. This was the only way to make the project viable. Richard Sager asked if they could build two extra Houses at the end of the road that pointed towards Moorthorpe way. Guy Williams explained that Sheffield (LPA) wished to join up the two Moorthorpe ways at a later date, so Avant Homes could not build them. Inspector O S Woodward seemed to think all legal matters had been resolved. I did Not."

Sheffield City Council put Plot C, D and E up for sale, site E has been developed. The planning inspectorate are expecting 150 more new houses to be built on plot C and D in Owlthorpe. Why have Sheffield (LPA) Sheffield City Councillors and your self-decided to do a 180 degree you turn and removed C and D from the plans? We do support plot C and D being turned into a wildlife sanctuary, but not at the expense of Plot F the Grassland Grazing project. Are you proposing to build 150 new homes on plot F to save face with the Planning inspectorate?

Under the freedom of information Act, I have been asking questions of many organisations. Before information is given you have to agree that the organisation or person you are investigating is informed.

Questions and answers can be found here: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/letters.htm> under headings:

Secretary of State Environment, Planning Inspectorate, Parliamentary Ombudsman, Environment Agency, Coal Authority, Natural England, Forestry Commission, Secretary of State Housing, Clive Betts MP for Sheffield South East, Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust and Sheffield South East Committee.

Research suggests that Owlthorpe is not a suitable area for property development.

Brook Lane Opencast Mine: The reference to coal at or near the surface is a direct result of coal outcrop of the Flockton (also named Chavery) seam running west to east through the middle of the Owlthorpe area. The seam dips in a northerly direction beneath Owlthorpe. As with most coal outcrops there is a high likelihood that it may be

worked at some point in the past due to the easy accessibility of the coal. This is further endorsed by the fact that former Brook Lane opencast immediately to the north-west was worked over the outcrop.

In the Reports from Lithos Consulting; Probe hole Log 18 Strata Wet between 14.2m and 18m, heavy water inflow below 14.8m depth. Probe Hole Log 21 Strata wet between 17.5m and 18.2m depth. Probe Hole Log 22 Strata wet between 16.8m and 17.4m depth. Probe Hole 24 Heavy water inflow from 20.5m depth. The reports from Lithos Probe hole Logs show heavy water much nearer the surface than 60m. Many of the Probe Hole Log's show surface coal is present at most locations.

Questions to the Environment Agency: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/EnvironmentAgency.pdf>

Question 2: On 22nd January 2021 workmen were seen working on drains on Moss Way Sheffield; GPS Coordinates: 53.340038,-1.362883 it is assumed this is where the flood waters of the disused mines usually discharge into the drains, but in heavy rain events the drains cannot cope and Ochre floods into the Ochre Dyke.

<https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/Ochredyke2.mp4> this video was taken at the same time as downstream flooding occurred in Beighton, Rotherham and Fishlake. Were the workmen from the Environment Agency? I have been investigating who is responsible for the discharge from the old mine workings with the Coal Authority evidence can be seen hear <https://www.ecologicalowlthorpe.org/LettertoCoalAuthority.pdf> The Coal Authority seem to suggest that the Environment Agency is responsible. Can you confirm this?

Question 2 Answer: This site is 1.5km upstream of main river (Environment Agency maintained river) so it is unlikely that Environment Agency staff would have been in this area as it is outside of our remit from a flood risk perspective. The river here is classed as an ordinary watercourse and will be the responsibility of Sheffield City Council.

Sheffield MP calls for answers about new housing estate being built on top of coal

<https://www.thestar.co.uk/news/politics/sheffield-mp-calls-for-answers-about-new-housing-estate-being-built-on-top-of-coal-3633718>

More than 12 months on and the foundations of new homes are still being built on top of surface coal.

<https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/Residents%20of%20Owlthorpe%20want%20answers.pdf>

With regards to my complaint about your involvement with stopping my request to Secretary of State Environment.

As part of the planning inspectorates defence against my complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman long after the enquiry was completed, I received this communication

[Dated: 27th July 2021 More information from Matt Dunkley-Roberts](#)

It states: "Clive Betts MP. Around 100 on appeal including the MP again (but not asking for recovery – see his letter enclosed). **I don't think this would need to be recovered but grateful for your views.**"

This document also does not address any of my concerns. The LPA's refusal reasons provided by Howard Baxter Sheffield (LPA) does not reflect the planning meeting I attended. I complained to inspector O S Woodward as I wanted him to review the footage of the Video. In refusing to review, I believe this was a dereliction of his duties as an independent arbitrator. Guy Williams Sheffield City Council Barrister investigated on my behalf and arranged with Dear Lucy Bond, Area Team Manager (City Centre & East Team) Development Management City Growth Department for a copy of the video that had been taken down for me to review. Copies of the video are available on request: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/EO-18ReviewofPlanningMeeting.pdf>

Extract: The planning Solicitor, Kate, explained procedure and vote was taken with many of the committee citing traffic impact as the reason for rejecting this application. The result was 10 against with 2 abstentions. After the vote was taken Colin Walker Interim Head said "**I think there is a significant risk if you throw Highways impact into this as a reason for refusal and that risk is that you effectively neutralise the site in residential terms.**" Highways impact was removed from the legal document.

I believe that if Inspector O S Woodward had reviewed the footage of the Planning Meeting. Planning permission to build on plot E would not have been given.

Clive, please read: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/OmbudsmanCaseworker.pdf> As requested by Samaira Ali Intake Caseworker Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman I followed the complaints procedure regarding The Planning Inspectorate. Documentation can be seen here: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/letters.htm>

Planning Inspectorate

[2nd March 2021 Appeal Decision by O S Woodward](#)

[Dated:13th July 2021 To Matt Dunkley-Roberts ThePlanning Inspectorat](#)

[Dated: 27th July 2021 Reply from Matt Dunkley-roberts](#)

[Dated: 27th July 2021 More information from Matt Dunkley-Roberts](#)

[Response to Planning Casework Unit](#)

[Dated: 11th August 2021 To Matt Dunkley-Roberts The Planning Inspectorat](#)

[Dated: 22nd September 2021 Final Responce Bob Palmer Planning Inspectorat](#)

As Samaira Ali says "If you are not happy with their final response, you are able to bring your complaint to us via an MP." This is what I have been trying to do but up to now you have not activated my complaint. I have tried other MPs but they say it has to be my own MP that is you Clive Betts.

Samaira Ali also says, "In terms of making a complaint against an MP, you are able to find further information here <https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financialinterests/parliamentary-commissioner-for-standards/complaints-and-investigations/>

Clive, you seem to be confused, my complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman is regarding Inspector O S Woodward and the Planning inspectorate. I believe Colin Walker no longer works for Sheffield City Council so I do not think a local Ombudsman is required. If one is required, I believe the Parliamentary Ombudsman will advise.

Clive, I ask again, please sign off on my request to the Parliamentary Ombudsman so he can start his enquiries.

Thank you for your Attention

Kind Regards

Michael Meredith

