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<https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org>

To Sheffield (LPA) and all concerned parties,

Date: 20th March 2023

Friends of Ecological Owlthorpe formally object to building on plot F. Although planning permission to build on plot (F) Owlthorpe Grass Land Grazing Project, a major component in Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail, was originally refused, it is very disappointing to see that Sheffield (LPA) have now reintroduced plot (F) with a proposal to build 150 new properties.

When first developed our oasis received government funding under Natural England Higher Level Stewardship Agreement. Opened with an official event on March 16th 2012 by children from three local primary schools assisted by **Clive Betts MP for Sheffield South East** and other Sheffield City Council Officers.

Under the freedom of information act I have received from Natural England's Rural payment agency <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/ResponcefromRuralPaymentsAgency.pdf> the plans and payment structure regarding Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail. Payments started in 2013 the payment structure is still active but Sheffield (LPA) stopped taking payments in 2020. Did Sheffield (LPA) stop taking payments because they wanted to develop the land? <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/HigherLevelStewardshipAgreementMap.pdf>

I have made many objections to building in Owlthorpe at several planning meetings and exchanged communications with the following government bodies, asking many questions sometimes requesting information under the freedom of information act, from the following organisations: Sheffield South East Committee, Planning Inspectorate, Parliamentary Ombudsman, Secretary of State Environment, Secretary of State Housing, Environment Agency, Natural England, Forestry Commission and Coal Authority. Evidence can be seen here: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/letters.htm>

Prior to the Sheffield City Council Planning Committee Meeting on Tuesday 2nd June 2020 following government guidelines:

<https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN00930>

Dated 26th May 2020, I made a formal request to **George Eustace MP Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** "Dear Mr. Eustace, I am writing to you because a Planning Application in Owlthorpe is to be determined at the Sheffield City Council Planning Committee Meeting on Tuesday 2nd June 2020. I formally request that you review this application with a view to calling it in. The planning application made by Avant Homes to build on Owlthorpe in Sheffield does not comply with Government directive concerning

upstream flood defences and climate change policy. I set out below my reasons for requesting this action for your own determination.”

<https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/Email26thMay2020GeorgeEustace.pdf>

we all saw the devastating floods in Beighton and Fishlake, Doncaster.

I watched the George Eustace interview <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbYXEDczL-U> with Sophie Ridge where he explained the Government's response to UK floods: An extra £4 Billion is to be spent on flood defences, in Yorkshire, upstream nature-based solutions are to be supported. Also published 23 January 2020 Press release. Environmental bodies set joint vision to tackle climate change Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, and Natural England outline a shared vision to use nature-based solutions to tackle the climate emergency. This is the reason I requested that **George Eustace MP Secretary of State for Environment**, call in the application made by Avant Homes.

Following Government guide lines and directives, my first piece of evidence presented to Planning inspector O S Woodward explains my thoughts and reasoning why Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail should be protected as an upstream nature-based solution protecting the environment against downstream flooding:

<https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/EO-01OriginalObjection21stFeb2020.pdf>

I delivered 21 pieces of evidence to the enquiry. The full reports can be seen here:

<https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/publicinquiry.htm>

Prior to the public inquiry I requested in a number of correspondences to Holly Dutton, Helen Skinner of the Planning Inspectorate, George Eustace MP and Robert Jenrick MP, that the Government review Sheffield City Council's Planning Meeting on 2nd June 2020. I believe that Sheffield (LPA) may have misled the Government with regards to the true outcomes of this meeting. I pressed this point with inspector O S Woodward as I wanted him to review the video footage of the meeting. In refusing to review the meeting I believe this was a dereliction of his duty as an independent adjudicator. I have reported him to the Parliamentary Ombudsman.

However, he did allow me to review the said meeting, this was arranged by Guy Williams, Sheffield City Council Barrister, and Lucy Bond, Area Team Manager. I was surprised to find that the video evidence from June 2020 had been removed from Sheffield Council's website. The reference number 19/03143/FUL remained the same throughout all enquiries. I thought that all evidence had to be made available to all parties until the Planning Inspector made his decision. The full report can be viewed here:

<https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/EO-18ReviewofPlanningMeeting.pdf>

The video tape has been made available to the Parliamentary Ombudsman.

Main points

“Cllr Jack Clarkson explained that the site is a wildlife site and would be a massive loss of green space if developed, used by dog walkers etc. Cllr Andrew Sanger asked the question: Why were the sites not sold as one? It seems in deliberation that the council did not want an

Ecology Impact Assessment. By selling them off separately they could avoid this type of assessment.”

“Cllr Chris Rosling- Josephs explained that traffic in the area is horrendous, not only around Crystal Peaks but also in the surrounding area and that a full independent traffic assessment needs be taken before the council considers any more developments in the area.”

“The planning Solicitor, Kate, explained procedure and vote was taken with many of the committee siting 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.**” Why was Highways impact removed from the legal document and not even considered by inspector O S Woodwards?”

At a recent Sheffield South East Committee Meeting I asked the Question: Is Democracy Dead?

Unelected civil servants in planning departments and the planning inspectorate are undermining decisions made by democratically elected Councillors and Members of Parliament, who speak on behalf of their constituents. For democracy to work Parliament needs to ACT and support decisions made on behalf of the electorate. Many councillors do feel undermined by civil servants and support a change in policy that makes civil servants more responsible to support decisions made by the electorate.

Published 2nd February 2023 [Natural England unveils new Green Infrastructure Framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/natural-england-unveils-new-green-infrastructure-framework).
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/natural-england-unveils-new-green-infrastructure-framework>
"Guidance will create nature-rich towns and cities, helping millions realise the benefits of accessing nature. As a comprehensive tool, the Green Infrastructure Frameworks and accompanying Design Guide will support local planning authorities and developers design and create more nature-rich urban greenspaces to meet mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements and support development of Nature Recovery Network."

"Natural England's commitment is that the public should be able to access green space or water, such as woodlands, wetlands, parks and rivers, within a 15-minute walk from their home."

Please read my vision for the Ochre Dyke corridor:

<https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/ochredyke.htm>

Also read our editorial in Yorkshire By-lines:

<https://yorkshirebylines.co.uk/region/working-with-nature-sheffield-campaign-calls-for-protection-of-upstream-environments/>

Thank you for your support

Michael Meredith

Please help save Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail

By signing our petition to Sheffield City Council: <https://chng.it/6vXHqcGG4S>

also, our petition to Parliamentary Ombudsman: <https://chng.it/FPc7X4Nq>