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Open Letter to Dr Nicky Rivers MCIEEM, Living Landscape Development Manager,  
Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust,  
37 Stafford Road,  
Sheffield,  
S2 2SF

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Dear Nicky,

My name is Michael Meredith of Ecological Owlthorpe. I did have a conversation with you after the planning inspector's enquiry. I also gave verbal evidence to the enquiry supported by 21 statement documents:

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

#### **History of Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail.**

The award winning Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail is a rural oasis in the urban southeast of Sheffield. The trail was opened in 2012 by children from three local primary schools assisted by Clive Betts MP for Sheffield South East.

795 local children took part in the project which was managed by Natural England under their Higher-Level Stewardship Scheme. Please zoom into the interpretation boards that show the extent of environmental work carried out. <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/Interpritation.htm> as you can see on all maps the trail extends from Moor Valley all the way down to Moss Way.

**In our campaign to preserve Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail**, we have been grateful for the involvement of Sheffield University students studying Landscape and Architecture under the guidance of Dr Nicola Dempsey. Her students took an in-depth look at the proposal to build in Owlthorpe by reviewing the hundreds of local objections which had been submitted to Sheffield LPA. They also studied the interpretation boards that show the extent of environmental work carried out in 2012 under the guidance of Natural England. The students all came to the same conclusion that our oasis should be preserved as an environmental success using nature-based solutions to combat downstream flooding. They fondly named the project **Ecological Owlthorpe**. This is the name we have adopted for our website.

Please read our mission statement in Yorkshire By-lines: <https://yorkshirebylines.co.uk/region/working-with-nature-sheffield-campaign-calls-for-protection-of-upstream-environments/>

In line with government directive on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020 I requested that the application made by Avant Homes be taken out of the hands of Sheffield (LPA) and called in by the George Eustace MP Secretary of State for the environment. My request was totally ignored by Sheffield (LPA) and the Planning Inspectorate. I have made formal complaints to the Planning Inspectorate and The Parliamentary Ombudsman; more complaint will follow. My complaints can be seen here:

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

Last year I contracted Covid-19 and like so many others I have been suffering from long covid. I am now able to walk without my walking stick. I am also able to concentrate on my project to save Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail.

I was so glad to hear: Published 2nd February 2023 [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."

**I am trying to find out information about two event that happened last year. The first:**

Published 30th Mar 2022, By Lucy Ashton. Clive Betts MP for Sheffield South East calls for answers about new housing estate being built on top of coal in Owlthorpe.

**Date: May 2023, please read my report:**

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

**The second Event: 22<sup>nd</sup> August Owlthorpe fields gains local wildlife site status:**

<https://www.wildsheffield.com/owlthorpe-fields-gains-local-wildlife-site-status/>

**The Question is, are the two events linked?**

I attended a Sheffield South East Local Area Committee Meeting held 11 January 2023. Where Simon Vincent and all councillors present at the meeting praised representatives of Owlthorpe Fields Action Group for having site C and D allocated as a wildlife sanctuary. But wait, what they have all overlooked? On March 16th 2012 Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail was opened with an official event by 795 children from three local primary schools assisted by Clive Betts MP for Sheffield South East and other Sheffield City Councillors. Our Oasis is a wildlife sanctuary and spreads all the way down from Moor Valley to Moss Way. Many councillors at previous planning meetings have explained that the area is a wildlife sanctuary funded by the government under Natural England's Higher Level stewardship agreement.

Sheffield (LPA), MP Clive Betts and a number of councillors have always wanted to build in Owlthorpe. Are we know to believe they have all had a change of heart and support site C and D as a wildlife sanctuary. **I do not think so**, because Simon Vincent Sheffield (LPA) are proposing to build 150 New Homes on plot F destroying The Grassland Grazing Project, which is a major component of Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail. I believe this is to balance the books with the Planning Inspectorate that are expecting 150 new Homes out of plot C and D. The land in Owlthorpe is not suitable for housing. I believe building more new houses in Owlthorpe will increase flood risk downstream In Beighton, Rotherham, Doncaster and Fishlake.

Please help save Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail by signing our petition to Parliamentary Ombudsman:

<https://chng.it/FPc7X4Nq> also, our petition to Sheffield City Council: <https://chng.it/6vXHqcGG4S>

To date, over 800 supporters have signed our petition to Sheffield City Council.

I look forward to receiving your views on this subject.

Kind regards

Michael Meredith

