

Simon Vincent

Jan 2, 2024, 4:57 PM
(17 hours ago)

to Ben, Andrew, Christine, Mark, Kurtis, Ian, Ann, Michael, Gary, me

Dear Mr Meredith,

Thank you for your further letter regarding the proposal to designate land at Owlthorpe ('Site F') for housing. I apologise for the delay in responding to your email. Objectors to the Sheffield Plan proposed site allocation at Owlthorpe will be able to present their views to the Inspector at the Sheffield Plan Public Examination. The Programme Officer for the Examination will write to you in due course to ask you to submit a written statement and to ask if you wish to appear at the public hearings (which we now expect will take place in the summer).

A number of the issues you have raised were partly covered in our response to the questions you submitted in September 2023 under the Environmental Information Request. In October, we also responded to a question from Roger Marsh that he submitted to the Southeast Local Area Committee (LAC) in October. Our response to the LAC also dealt with some of the issues that you have raised. Apologies if you were not present at that meeting or have not seen that response.

In the response to the question from Mr Marsh we explained that the site at Moor Valley ("Owlthorpe F") was allocated for housing in the Sheffield Unitary Development Plan (UDP) in 1998; this remains the statutory development plan for the city and therefore housing is the allocated land use for that site. Mr Marsh is correct in that, in the Pre-Submission Draft of the Local Plan in 2013, the site was instead shown as a "Countryside Area" designation, where development was not proposed, because at that time the land was not needed for housing. However, the main reason the Council was not able to proceed with that Draft Plan was due to the need to provide more housing land as a result of changing Government policy in relation to housing land requirements. Given these significant changes in circumstances, the Pre-Submission Draft Plan was not submitted to the Government for public examination (and was therefore never adopted). Subsequently, the Council was obliged to look again at how to meet its housing land requirements citywide in the Draft Local Plan and the site at Moor Valley, it being a UDP housing allocation and therefore also not being in the Green Belt, was proposed again as a housing site allocation in the latest Draft Sheffield (Local) Plan.

The Council's Ecology Unit has assessed Site F as part of the site selection process and it is very different in value to the 'Owlthorpe Fields' area (Sites C and D), which are to be protected in the Local Plan as a Local Wildlife Site and Local Green Space. The Plan includes conditions on the site allocation to protect the hedgerows and other ecologically valuable areas, including ensuring that connective ecological corridors/areas (including buffers) shown on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and combined natural capital opportunity maps are to be maintained on site and removed from the developable area, plus any development would be subject to at least 10% biodiversity net gain.

The Countryside Stewardship scheme covering Site F ceased in March last year and the Council no longer receives payments for managing the land this way.

The matters you raise in relation to the Avant Homes scheme (Site E) were covered at the public inquiry relating to the planning application for that site and I see no need to comment further on those issues in this response. I assume that if you have written to the Ombudsman regarding the appeal procedure, they will have responded to your complaint.

I hope you find the above response helpful.

Kind regards

Simon

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