

Dear reader,

## **Compliments of the season to all our supporters.**

17th December 2023, Update Statement regarding our project to save the grassland & grazing project a major component of Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail by Michael Meredith

## **Residents of Owlthorpe Still Want Answers**

22nd August 2023 Original posted by, Stuart Harratt & Molly Williams (BBC News) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-66582292>

1,500 Sheffield residents sign petition to stop building amid fears of flooding by [Megan Hodson](#) | Oct 27, 2023 | [News](#) | [The Steel Speaker](#)

Plot C and D are removed from the Sheffield Housing Development Plan and plot F is re-introduced without consultation with Owlthorpe residents.

11 January 2023 I attended the Sheffield South East LAC meeting. PRESENT: Councillors Karen McGowan (Chair), Kurtis Crossland, Tony Downing, Bryan Lodge, Bob McCann, Kevin Oxley, Gail Smith, and Ann Woolhouse.

“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.

Many residents of Owlthorpe were shocked and disappointed to see plot F the Grassland & Grazing project had been re-introduced to the new Housing plans. I was the 2nd Questioner to speak. I made my concerns and objections direct to Simon Vincent.

Extracts: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/PlanningObjections12thApril2023.pdf>

20th February 2023 I started a petition titled: “**Please help save Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail**”: <https://chng.it/6vXHqcGG45> . To date **1,638 supporters have signed**.

**Before starting our petition, I undertook an extensive research project under the freedom of information act. I asked many questions of official bodies. Questions and answers can be seen hear:**

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

Wednesday 23<sup>RD</sup> March 2023. I also attended the South East Local Area Committee (LAC) meeting. Many Owlthorpe residents wanted to use their democratic right to voice their concerns, but (chair) Karen McGowan refused to listen and explained that The Grassland and Grazing Project was not on the agenda for discussion. After this meeting I received this threatening communication from Karen McGowan: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/emailfromKarenMcGowan.pdf> Please read and also read my reply: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/ReplytoKarenMcGowan.pdf> At the end of this correspondence I requested that Sheffield South Est LAC hold a meeting as early as can be arranged. So that residents of Owlthorpe can voice their concerns to members of the Council about the proposed destruction of the Grassland & Grazing Project. Plot (F). This request was made Dated: 27th March 2023 up to the present date no such meeting has been arranged. And I have not been invited to take part in Sheffield South East LAC meetings.

**Extract from the 11 January 2023 Sheffield South East LAC meeting. 9. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS 9.1** The Chair advised that questions had been submitted in writing from Mr Michael Meredith. Mr Meredith would receive answers to these questions in writing. Mr Meredith advised that he still awaited written answers to previous questions submitted. The Chair assured Mr Meredith that answers would be provided in writing. Dated 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023 I still have not received written answers to any of my questions.

I was informed by a member of Sheffield City Council of a meeting that took place in Owlthorpe Fields. And as far as they were concerned all issues regarding Building in Owlthorpe had been resolved.

It is believed that this meeting was attended by Members of Owlthorpe Fields Action Group, MP Clive Betts, Terry Fox head of Sheffield Council, Other Councillors, Representatives of Sheffield (LPA) and wildlife experts. I believe the meeting was to support Owlthorpe Fields Action Group in their endeavours to have plot C and D removed from the Housing development plan and preserved as a wildlife site. To be clear we do support Owlthorpe Fields Action Group in their endeavours to remove plot C and D from the Sheffield Housing development Plan, **but not at the expense of (Plot F) the Owlthorpe Grassland & Grazing Project, a major component of Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail.**

Evidence received from: <http://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/InformationRightsTeam31stMarch2022.pdf> shows that the Government has been funding Sheffield City Council under NATURAL ENGLAND'S HIGHER LEVEL STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENT.

This map: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/HigherLevelStewardshipAgreementMap.pdf> shows the areas of Maintenance of hedgerows/ditches/Grassland and wetlands of very high environmental value. This area has been established as a wildlife site for many years. For currency in this matter 12<sup>th</sup> November 2023,

<http://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/InformationRights12thNovember2023.pdf>

I requested updated information regarding Higher Level Stewardship Agreement number AG00430322 between Sheffield City Council and Rural Payment Agency. I have now received detailed information which shows that Sheffield City Council are still reviving payments 2023. Apart from reviving funds for the Maintenance of hedgerows/ditches/Grassland and wetlands of very high environmental value. **Also, within the schedule provisions must be made for wildlife including Bat Boxes and Bird Boxes.**

The interpretation Boards: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/Interpritation.htm> shows the extent of the environmental work carried out in the construction of our Oasis. Owlthorpe residents believed that the areas on the map were out of bounds as far as property development is concerned.

I took part in the Inquiry regarding plot E. My reports and evidence Ref: EO-01 to EO-21 can be seen hear:

<https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/publicinquiry.htm> Held on 12-15, 19, and 21 January 2021 Site visit made on 20 January 2021 by O S Woodward BA(Hons.) MA MRTPI an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. I have not been satisfied with his decision: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/Appeal%20Decision%20-%203258555.pdf> I Have reported him to the Parliamentary Ombudsman <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/OmbudsmanCaseworker.pdf> I have followed the Planning Inspectorates procedure regarding complains <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/letters.htm#PlanningInspectorat> The Planning Inspectorate are aware I am not satisfied with their excuses. Protocol states that I can only present my complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman through my MP Clive Betts. MP Clive Betts has not presented my case to the Parliamentary Ombudsman please read my communications with MP Clive Betts: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/letters.htm#CliveBetts>

**Just received copy of the minutes of Sheffield South East LAC meeting Dated: 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

<https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/Printed%20minutes%2005102023%201830%20South%20East%20Local%20Area%20Committee.pdf>

### **Agenda item Public Questions and Petitions**

**6.2 Roger Marsh**, By the way of introduction, for those that do not know me, my name is Roger Marsh. I have been a resident of Owlthorpe since 2003. I helped found Owlthorpe Community Forum, and was Chair from 2008 to 2012. In 2012 I formed and chair Owlthorpe Local & Natural History Group. This is something I did not know until today.

### **Extracts highlighted in Yellow**

The Chair (Councillor Kurtis Crossland) stated that this question along with the response will be included in the minutes. I received a certificate from the South East Community Assembly – Roll of Honour 2010 in recognition of outstanding contribution to the community. Also, its appreciation of the efforts I had made to improve the lives of

the people who live in the area. In 2011 Yorkshire in Bloom awarded me a Discretionary Rose Award in the category 'Community Champion' the only award of this type in the whole of Yorkshire that year. Over these 15 years we have carried out numerous environmental projects in Owlthorpe in conjunction with Sheffield City Council (SCC). These projects have created a green oasis, in an increasing urban development, for the local residents and visitors to enjoy the green lungs of Owlthorpe. These projects are important to their mental, physical health and wellbeing. Organised health walks continue to take place every Thursday for both striders and strollers. I ask this question on behalf of the many voluntary community volunteers and the then primary school children who have worked tirelessly on these projects. Who are probably not aware of the plan to vandalise their hard work. The agreement that we had with SCC was that we would be supported in this environmental work on the understanding that we would not carry out any work or object to the building of houses on Sites C, D, and E. With regards to Site F also designated SES 10 in the new Sheffield Draft Local Plan, a statement attributed to SSC on the BBC Website stated that the location had been proposed as a housing site for many years. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-66582292> This statement is demonstrably untrue. Following detailed research carried out by Celia Jackson then Secretary of the Moss Valley Wildlife Group, she presented a petition to have Site F removed as a planned housing site. SCC agreed to her petition and accordingly removed Site F as housing land from the current Local Plan. Subsequently I lobbied SCC to get the release of outstanding Section 106 monies (retained by the builder of Woodland Heights housing development at Owlthorpe for 10 years). Once the £67,455 Section 106 monies had been released, we completed many planned environmental projects, all in conjunction with Sally Pereira the then SCC Landscape Planning Officer. The first project we undertook together with SCC was the Owlthorpe Grasslands Grazing Project. Once Phases 1 and 1a had been completed we moved on to Phase 2. The site for Phase 2 was the site previously designated Site F that had earlier been removed as a planned housing site. We installed post & wire fencing and access gates. We installed pipework to provide water to the drinking troughs to all phases of the Owlthorpe Grasslands Grazing Project, including Phases 2. The established hedgerows within Phases 2 were laid. New hedgerows were planted around the perimeter of Phase 2. After the completion of Phase 2 the site was grazed by animals from Graves Park Animal Farm. These included rare breeds of sheep, llamas and cattle including Highland Cattle, this would not have been allowed had the site been allocated for housing. We then moved on to the Owlthorpe Heritage and Nature Trail Project creating footpaths around the green areas of Owlthorpe, including Phase 2. We also carried out Drystone Wall Restoration Projects and Hedgerow Planting and Laying Projects. A large proportion of this work was paid for by grants from Sheffield South East Ward Pots. The basis for the grants for hedgerow planting was Carbon Sequestration. The work on these projects was carried out to the plans of SCC Landscape Planning Officer by volunteers from the community supervised by Sheffield Landscape Trust. A large number of the 12,000 trees in the hedgerows were planted by over 150 Primary School Children from the South East of Sheffield. The schools that have been involved in our environmental projects are: Rainbow Forge Primary School, St. John Fisher Catholic School, Birley Spa Community Primary School, Reignhead Primary School, Brookhouse Primary School, Mosborough Primary School, and Halfway Junior School. Part of the Owlthorpe Heritage and Nature Trail follows the perimeter of Phase 2 of the grazing project as do the hedgerows. These and our other projects were part of our Owlthorpe in Bloom entries in the Yorkshire in Bloom competition. We received six awards in four years culminating in a gold award in 2012. During our work on these projects, we received many visits from SCC councillors, Council officers, Lord Mayors and our MP who we wish to thank for their support. They are too numerous to mention here but we do have photographs of their visits. I read with interest the South East LAC Community Plan 2022-2023. I note that under Parks and Open Spaces it does not mention the fact that there are no parks in the south east of Sheffield. Also, there is no mention of the environmental projects in Owlthorpe that have opened up its green spaces that the public can access, and have become valuable community assets. The Plan states that it wants to support voluntary community groups and to undertake specific ward projects. The Plan also addresses the public's health and wellbeing. The Plan also addresses the decline in community groups. The Plan suggests the promoting of environmental awareness. Work with schools to educate young residents and promote junior environmental champions. Develop a SE environmental group and environmental champions. How are these aims compatible with the plan to destroy Phase 2 of the Owlthorpe Grassland Grazing Project, its adjacent hedgerows and sections of the Owlthorpe Heritage and Nature Trail, work that was carried out by local community Volunteers and local primary school children. Utilizing Section 106 money and money from the Ward Pot? We assume that reinstating Site F into the Local Plan was done in error by someone who was not aware of all of the facts, and not a deliberate act of environmental vandalism like the Street Tree fiasco. What are you going to do to correct this glaring error and remove Site F from the Plan as a planned housing site?

This statement by Roger Marsh has help me understand why there has been so much hostility to our petition and is damning evidence against SCC, Councillors, Sheffield (LPA), Lord Mayors and MP Clive Betts. They all saw an opportunity to make money at the expense of residents of Owlthorpe. Not only by selling the land but also benefiting from the annual rates, totally ignoring the wishes, health and wellbeing of residents of Owlthorpe, shame on them.

In support of our project to save Owlthorpe as an upstream nature-based solution to stop downstream flooding, we have recently produced: [Welcome to our on-line Visitor's Guide to Owlthorpe Heritage and Nature Trail](#)

<https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/directionsmaps.htm> 2,781 views to date. Please **SHARE** on social media.

Our project is under threat from Sheffield City Council (LPA) who wish to build 150 new properties on (plot F) the Grassland & Grazing Project a major component of Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail. Please sign our petition <https://chnng.it/6vXHqcGG4S> A Big thank you to the **1,638** who in such a short period of time have signed.

If you wish to give your reasons for signing the petition you can. About 70 of our supporters have already given their reasons for signing. Please look under All Reasons for signing. See why other supporters are signing, why this petition is important to them, and share your own reasons for signing.

[Please read our Mission statement](#)

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

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Please follow our Ecological Owlthorpe Facebook pages.

Thank you for your attention

Michael Meredith

