

Site visit Wednesday 20th January 2021
Organized by Inspector O S Woodward

Attendees Site Visit:

Inspector O S Woodward

Howard Baxter Sheffield (LPA)

Representatives from Avant Homes

Garry Monaghan Owlthorpe Fields Action Group

Sandra Fretwell-Smith Owlthorpe Fields Action Group

Michael Meredith Ecological Owlthorpe

- 1. Facts Matter:**
Scrub land identified behind Owlthorpe Surgery: Apparently, many scientists around the world say “this is the type of ground that vertebrates live in and is very valuable to the ecology and needs to be protected.”
- 2. Facts Matter:** I showed inspector O S Woodward, Howard Baxter Sheffield (LPA) and representatives from Avant Homes the water retention on site E by placing a ruler in the tracks left by the offroad bikers. Local residents of Owlthorpe understand that how in wet months millions of gallons of water are stored in site E and gently released into the Ochre Dyke. It seems to me that none of the officials understood the significance of standing water and the effect it has on downstream flooding in bad weather conditions. This is better demonstrated in website: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/Water.mp4> Please view.
- 3. Facts Matter:** Disagreement about where Ochre Dyke woods are. I say, according to all the maps on the interpretation boards that number 7 is Ochre Dyke Woods spreading almost all the way to the medical centre: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/images/Entrance.jpg> I explained this fact to inspector O S Woodward, Howard Baxter Sheffield (LPA) and representatives from Avant Homes. I also showed the boundary of our oasis, which spreads from Moor Valley down to Moss Way. They ignored this fact, relying instead on their determination to build on our Nature Reserve.
- 4. Facts Matter:** I identified the point on Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature trail where Plot E would cut through the nature trail and join up with Moorthorpe Way. The relevance of this is that earlier in the inquiry, Guy Williams, the barrister acting for Sheffield City Council, under cross examination from Richard Sager Barrister acting for Avant Homes, said that the council intended to join site E to Moorthorpe Way. Guy Williams also explained that Avant Homes would be able to develop site C and D at a later stage. Richard Sager needed to have this information confirmed for his client Avant Homes before they build on site E. At this site visit, representatives for Avant Homes and Howard Baxter of Sheffield LPA, thought we should not be discussing the joining up of Moorthorpe Way. They had not attended the enquiry, therefore not witnessing the conversation regarding this. I was present throughout the entirety of the enquiry and paid close attention to the discussion between both barristers regarding this issue.

5. **Facts Matter:** As we continued up the Owlthorpe Heritage and Nature trail I showed the Inspector the capped off mine workings at the top of the steps. Beyond this point is a swamp area that leads up the culvert that brings water from the Birley Woods Golf Course. Too dangerous for us to visit on this day. This area is where some of the trees and vegetation that have died are washed down under ground into the disused mineworking's. In bad weather Ochre is washed out of the mineworking's. The mines closed in the early 1970s. When the mines were working, the water was pumped out but they have not been in operation for many years and in bad weather they flood. In my evidence EO-05 Flood risk assessment I cover how coal is formed in rivers of coal that run under Owlthorpe.

6. **Facts Matter:** As we moved further up the trail, members of Avant Homes team showed the Inspector a patch of land to the left of the trail saying they could do something to compensate for the disturbance of trees and vegetation on site E. They were pointing to the grazing project as described in Ecological Owlthorpe Evidence EO-09 and EO-10. <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/EO-09OwlthorpeMeadowsInvertebrateSurvey2011.pdf> If you look on the maps in this evidence you can see the area I am referring to. EO-08 shows the extent of work carried out in these surveys. Richard Sager Barrister acting for Avant Homes rubbishes the invertebrate surveys in Evidence EO-08, EO-09 and EO-10. But perhaps he has not paid attention to the author of these Surveys, Derek Whiteley, Associate Ecologist Sheffield City Ecology Unit.

7. **Facts Matter:** I explained to inspector O S Woodwards, Howard Baxter Sheffield (LPA) and representatives that the Grazing project is part of The Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail and is currently receiving Government funds under the Natural England Higher level funding arrangements. So, if they were to use this area for offsetting payments they would be double funding this area?

8. **Facts Matter:** The next point we came to was the gate on the Grazing project Evidence EO-07. If you scroll down the page you can see site F which overlays Grazing plot 2. If the council have their way this also will also be destroyed. I am informed that the problem with developing plot F is that access to the plot could not be obtained through Moor Valley. Therefore development cannot take place until the access to Moorthorpe Way is obtained. This then opens up the prospect of development of the rest of the site.

9. **Facts Matter:** As we continue around our nature reserve, we see many of the Interpretation boards which show the extent of work carried out by school children and members of the local community supported by Crystal Peaks shopping mall and Retail Park. Our local MP, Clive Betts was involved in this project. On all the interpretation boards is the map of our nature reserve which show all the work carried out under the direction of Natural England under their higher-level stewardship scheme. Ochre Dyke is clearly marked on all notice boards, it is number 7. I had hoped that the interpretation boards would have explained the location of where Ochre Dyke is but it seems that the Inspector, Avant Homes and Sheffield City Council representatives are totally blinded by their wish to build on our Nature Reserve. This totally ignores the evidence that local residents know, many of whom were involved with their children building our nature reserve. Many parents use the interpretation board to educate their children as they explore our oasis.

10. **Facts Matter:** As we examined plot C there is an abundance of scrub land and some trees. In the summer this area comes alive with vegetation, invertebrates, insects and birds. As Jenny Palmer in Evidence EO-03 says “Scrub is so valuable yet so undervalued” this is echoed by the top scientists around the world. Apparently, it is the natural habitat of invertebrates which are at the bottom of the food chain. If we lose invertebrates other animals that depend on them cannot survive. Andrew Baker Ecologist spoke for Avant Homes and said “it is only scrub land and is of no importance”. This is a complete contradiction to what most scientists around the world are saying. Andrew Baker also said that many of the species that were present when Derek Whiteley Associate Ecologist Sheffield City Ecology Unit examined the site back in 2010, 2011 and 2012 are no longer on site. This is very worrying and backs up what all scientists around the world are all saying. “we are losing the vertebrates that are vital to support the ecosystem,”

11. **Facts Matter:** We examined Plot D. Plot D is also vital for invertebrates as described in Evidence EO-08
looking on the map and reading what is there gives a better understanding as described in number 1 of the EO-08 map.

12. **Facts Matter:** Plot D is also where Avant Homes suggest where a SUDS system should be located according to their flood risk assessment and drainage strategy, produced by AVIE Consulting LTD Leeds. As we passed the point where the SUDS system would be, it looks very pretty on the drawing board, but in a major flood event the drainage system will be overwhelmed because of water pressure. If you needed any more proof that the suds system would fail it came during a site visit to the proposed development area. As we passed by the spot where the suds system would be, the path had turned into a river that we all had to paddle through. This was not a rainy day but surface water was pouring off the land. Members of (OAG) are witnesses to this fact. The building inspector, Howard Baxter of Sheffield (LPA) and Avant Homes representatives seemed oblivious to this fact. It is the water pressure from Birley Wood Golf Course standing approx.: 650ft above sea level, Culvert opposite Garden centre: 420ft, capped off Colliery Drift 382ft that cause the problem as by the time water reaches Moss Way 212ft, it is too powerful for the drainage system to cope. Ochre washes out of the mine workings this can be seen behind Crystal Peaks 178ft video <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/Water.mp4> of flooding taken at the same time as flooding occurred in Beighton, Rotherham and finally Fishlake standing approx.: 23ft above sea level.

13. **Facts Matter:** What I do not see in AVIE Consulting LTD Leeds flood risk assessment, is how they intend to deal with the flooding from the disused mineworking’s. When the mines were in use, they had to pump the water out. Climate change and deforestation are causing more flooding downstream. The first photo on my flood risk assessment evidence <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/EO-05Floodriskassessment.pdf> shows the colour of the water in the Ochre Dyke that has washed out of the disused mineworking’s. View the video on our website: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/Ochredyke2.mp4> this video was taken at the same time as Beighton, Rotherham and Fishlake flooded. <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/EO-05Floodriskassessment.pdf> The second and third photos show flooding in Beighton; the last photo shows flooding in Fishlake. It is not until you have experienced a major flood event that you can understand what happens. In evidence <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/EO-17ListoffloodsinSheffield.pdf> I was caught up in the Sheffield flood of 2007: On 25 June, Sheffield suffered extensive damage as

the river Don over-topped its banks, causing widespread flooding in the Don Valley area of the city. A 14-year-old boy was swept away by the swollen River Sheaf and a 68-year-old man died after attempting to cross a flooded road in Sheffield city centre. The Meadowhall shopping centre was closed due to flooding with some shops remaining closed downstairs until late September and Sheffield Wednesday's ground at Hillsborough was under 6 feet (1.83 m) of water. A number of people had to be rescued by RAF helicopters from buildings in the Brightside area. The pressure of water overwhelmed the drainage system, water shot up 5ft in the air out of the grates because of water pressure. Deforestation is causing the problem and pouring more concrete onto an area that is known to cause flooding downstream is in my opinion negligent and foolhardy.

14. **Fact Matter:** As we progressed around the site, I asked Howard Baxter about my original complaint 22 Royston Avenue Sheffield S20 6SG (Objects) Comment submitted date: Fri 21 Feb 2020 Flooding. He did not remember my communication, it made me wonder how many of the other complaints from other residents of Owlthorpe did he read?

Report by Michael Meredith Ecological Owlthorpe