

## Over view of my objection to Avant Homes building in Owlthorpe

You may think I am averse to building new properties. Nothing could be further from the truth. I have always been interested in architecture. My father was a draftsman-estimator and was involved in the construction of many of the large steel plants. The council often asked him to overview large projects before granting permission to build. My father wrote into the contracts provisions for the main contractor to pay subcontractors say £1m on a certain date to one, and say £750,000 to another subcontractor on a different day and so forth. Projects my father signed off on finished on time and on budget. This is something that seems to elude the class of today. At this enquiry I have suggested that Avant Homes build on the disused aerodrome at Norton which is a Brownfield site by definition boasting many derelict buildings. The Norton site would also not cause downstream flooding.

Published 6 August 2020 : Announced by Robert Jenrick MP the Secretary of State for Housing:

“Government sets out plans to overhaul outdated planning system and reform the way the country builds. Plans to streamline process cut red tape and harness technology to deliver homes faster. **Valued green spaces protected for future generations, with more building on Brownfield land.** Building beautiful homes, with communities at heart of new planning system. 30% discount through First Homes, with an emphasis on key workers.”

I just wonder which part of **valued green spaces protected for future generations, with more building on Brownfield land** did Sheffield (LPA) Clive Betts MP Sheffield South East and Avant Homes not understand?

In our campaign to preserve the Owlthorpe oasis, 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 local objections. Students asked about my objection which was about downstream flooding as well as the ecology of the area. Sheffield University Students named the area Ecological Owlthorpe and they did ask me to explain about flooding. It was at this time I realised I needed to produce a basic Website to explain how water from Ecological Owlthorpe had flooded Beighton, Rotherham and Fishlake. Sheffield has many hills and this is what causes the flooding to be extreme. Students also studied the interpretation boards that show the extent of environmental work carried out in 2012 under the guidance of Natural England. While many came to the conclusion that the oasis should remain intact, as requested they produced alternative plans to control the environmental impact, should permission for the proposed development be granted. One suggestion was that the maximum number of properties on plot E should be not be 72, but 36. The overall consensus of the

students was that the who greenspace in question should be left to nature as it already is an ecological oasis.

As an alternative to this scheme, and if government pronouncements about preference being given to Brownfield sites are serious, housing developments could be built on the disused aerodrome at Norton, which is Brownfield land by definition and boasts many derelict buildings in need of redevelopment.

A further consideration is the need for new, environmentally friendly technology to be integrated into any plans. These should, for example, ensure that houses have south-facing aspects to capture the benefits of solar technology, with storage batteries capable of taking advantage of new government legislation that says properties with excess electricity can sell back to the national grid. High-speed charging points must be incorporated for both electric cars and bicycles, with perhaps a car scrappage deal for residents moving into new housing and even possibly a ban on combustion engines from new housing estates.

I requested that Dr Nicola Dempsey's students produce plans explaining how a project may look if houses were constructed off the building line with a south facing aspect and what impact this would have on the landscape. Dr Nicola Dempsey is happy to produce such work as it would be a valuable exercise for her students. It would be more valuable if the work was produced for stakeholders. Students working with professionals and line managers would give students a taste of reality within the working environment. Working in such an environment would make it much easier for Dr Nicola Dempsey to evaluate her students' potential.

Throughout this process I have endeavoured to show how Ecological Owlthorpe is an upstream nature-based solution protecting the environment from downstream flooding. I have produced a number of pieces of evidence for the enquiry numbering EO-01 to EO-21. I was hoping to use my website which is produced with a one-click solution to make the process of looking at information easier to show at the enquiry, but this was not allowed. My web address is [www.ecological-owlthorpe.org](http://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org) please view my editorial in Yorkshire By-lines.

I was able to highlight many of the points in Jenny Palmer's email. Jenny is one of many victims of the flooding in Fishlake. The points are highlighted in yellow in evidence EO-03

I had requested that George Eustace, Secretary of State for the Environment call-in this application before this enquiry began, so that flood risk assessments could be undertaken. I strongly believe that potential flooding should have precedence over housing development. My application to call-in was submitted by the deadline, but Holly Dutton of the planning inspectorate says that Robert Jenrick is the only one who

can call-in a planning application and has refused mine. I am disappointed not to have received replies from either Mr. Jenrick or Mr. Eustace with regard to reasons for their decision.

I am not against building new houses I just think that we need to take more care of where they are positioned. Sheffield City Council (LPA) has a duty of care and attention, which they totally ignore. This is evident in plans for development in other areas of Sheffield which will contribute more downstream flooding.

Mr. Clive Betts, MP explained at the hustings at Rainbow Forge Primary School that deforestation is the cause of down stream flooding, but now he wants to revert back to his outdated building policy by ignoring the Climate Emergency Policy he and Sheffield City Council have signed.

I realise that many politicians are pre-occupied with COVID-19 and I therefore requested that this inquiry be postponed. It appears Sheffield City Council (LPA), supported by Clive Betts MP and Avant Homes seem to be determined to take advantage of the pandemic and push this application through.

In my recent visit to Fishlake I observed civil engineers working to strengthen flood defences, and local residents are grateful. In my evidence I have shown in EO-04 the problems Fishlake live with on a daily basis. A year on and many residents are putting their lives back together. Some have had no problem with insurance claims but many have. I observed mothers taking children to look at the River Don. Children are perceptive. They walk back with their mom doing the things kids do, but they have been through a harrowing experience which will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Please view flooding in Fishlake 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6ABoXGUgR4&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR2kKDr9l0kWq5pY0mZPXaS0ECPfPwtJsbvK8Xx1XH2MvpMZ9raFzXslick> the tow path shown in this video shows that it is in a state of collapse.

Michael Meredith