

Is democracy dead?

What is the point in Sheffield City Council having a planning and highways committee when the results of the meetings are totally ignored, together with the wishes of the local community?

Prior to the public inquiry regarding Avant Homes Building in Owlthorpe, I requested in a number of correspondences to Holly Dutton, Heken Skinner, George Eustace MP and Robert Jenrick MP that the Government review Sheffield City Council's Planning Meeting on 2nd June 2020. I believe that Sheffield (LPA) may have misled the Government with regards to the true outcomes of this meeting.

At the inquiry, I specifically asked the Planning Inspector that he review the meeting 2nd June 2020. He declined. I personally think this was a dereliction of the Inspector's duties as an independent arbitrator in this inquiry.

However, he did allow me to review the said meeting, which was arranged by Guy Williams, Sheffield City Council Barrister, and Lucy Bond, Area Team Manager. I was surprised to find that the video evidence from June 2020 had been removed from Sheffield Council's website. The reference number 19/03143/FUL remained the same throughout all enquiries. I thought that all evidence had to be made available to all parties until the Planning Inspector made his decision.

Review of Planning and Highways Committee Meeting 2 nd June 2020 (by Michael Meredith Ecological Owlthorpe) Subject: Land off Moorthorpe Way.

Dear Lucy Bond, Area Team Manager (City Centre & East Team) Development Management City Growth Department Thank you for enabling me to review the Planning Committee webcast at which the Owlthorpe Scheme was discussed. I have successfully reviewed the content. I also thank you for copying in the Planning Inspectorate and blind copied the legal representatives to each party into this e-mail.

This is my report evidence Number: EO-18. Verbally delivered today 21st January 2021. Review of Planning and Highways Committee Meeting

Attendees to the Meeting: Chair: Cllr Peter Rippon, Planning Solicitor: Kat, Colin Walker interim Head, Helen Johnson SCC Highways, Howard Baxter, Martin Nowacki, Abby Brownsword, Craig Rodgerson, Michael Jonson, Leonie Kapadia, Cllr Peter Price, Cllr Jack Clarkson, Cllr Jayne Dunn, Cllr Andrew Sanger, Cllr Allen Law, Cllr Joe Otten, Cllr Dianne Hirst, Cllr Tony Damms and Cllr Chris Rosling-Josep.

Chair: Cllr Peter Rippon started the proceedings. First on the agenda was the plans of the application which were presented for all to see. Discussion took place between all the members of the committee.

Chair: Peter Rippon explained that there were many objections to this planning application and requested that the objections be heard. First up was Clive Betts MP Sheffield South East. Mr. Betts often speaks early at this type of meeting, relying on his out-dated housing policy. Mr. Betts was housing Minister for 6 years under Tony

Blaire's government. Members of the council look to Clive when it comes to housing decisions. He always complains that the density does not meet the housing policy: More affordable homes more social housing; Density is Key; More social homes. If we allow this scheme to go through at low density and no affordable housing is on site, we would be setting a very bad precedent for any other scheme that may come forward.

In deliberation, many members of the committee were paraphrasing Mr. Betts. In my opinion this is the reason that Density is in the legal document.

A number of local residents voiced their concerns along with other specialists.

Cllr Jack Clarkson explained that the site is a wildlife site and would be a massive loss of green space if developed, used by dog walkers etc.

Cllr Andrew Sanger asked the question: Why were the sites not sold as one? It seems in deliberation that the council did not want an Ecology Impact Assessment. By selling them off separately they could avoid this type of assessment.

Cllr Peter Garbutt said "All three sites should be taken as one site" and asked the question: Does there need to be an Environmental Impact Assessment if they are? He also had concerns about traffic problems.

Helen Johnson's SCC Highways impact assessment was completely castigated by many local Cllr's saying it was totally inadequate. Cllr Peter Garbutt, Cllr Dianne Hurst, Cllr Chris Rosling-Josephs and Cllr Rodger Davidson all voiced their concerns.

Cllr Chris Rosling Josephs explained that traffic in the area is horrendous, especially around Crystal Peaks but also in the surrounding area and that a full independent traffic assessment needs be taken before the council considers any more developments in the area. The planning Solicitor, Kate, explained procedure and vote was taken with many of the committee siting traffic impact as the reason for rejecting this application. The result was 10 against with 2 abstentions.

After the vote was taken Colin Walker Interim Head said "I think there is a significant risk if you throw Highway's impact into this as a reason for refusal and that risk is that you effectively neutralise the site in residential terms." Highway's impact was removed from the legal document. I would like to know why.

Many local residents viewed this Planning meeting live and are shocked and dismayed with Colin Walker's comments. But because this application was refused many thought the application had failed and are very disappointed to see that it has not. This, together with statement by Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for Housing (referenced in evidence Ecological Owlthorpe EO-05) has given Avant Homes the confidence to take their appeal to Mr. Jenrick MP who has subsequently appointed a Planning Inspector.

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.”

This completes Michael Meredith’s review.

<https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/EO-18ReviewofPlanningMeeting.pdf>

It is worth remembering it was Sheffield City Council, heavily supported by Clive Betts MP for Sheffield South East that put the land at Owlthorpe up for sale in the first place, relying on their outdated housing policy. Sheffield City Council and Clive Betts MP have all signed up to Climate Change policies but are totally ignorant to understand what is required to meet there new commitments.

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