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Open Letter to Simon Vincent
Service Manager Strategic Planning
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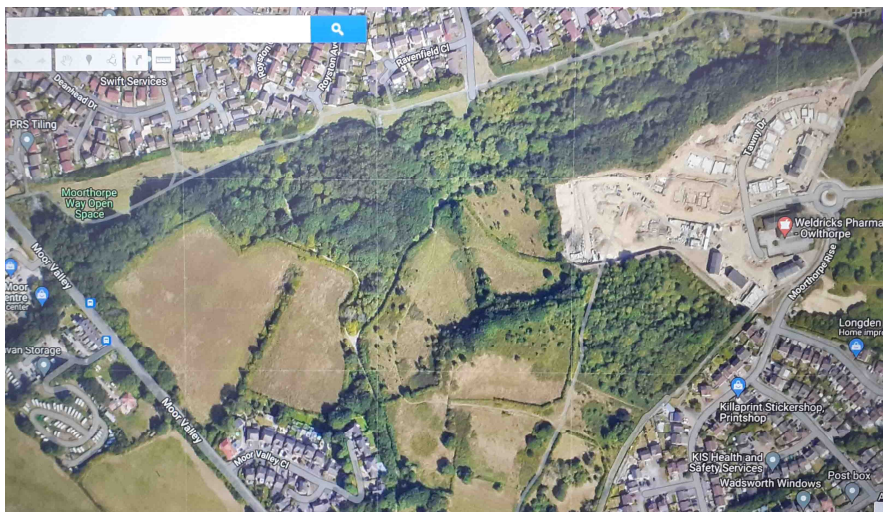
Dated: 11th September 2023

Dear Simon Vincent,

Thank you for your correspondence dated: 21st August 2023.

You may recall we had a conversation when you and your team kindly delivered your presentation to Sheffield City Council South East Local Area Committee Meeting held 11 January 2023. PRESENT: Councillors Karen McGowan (Chair), Kurtis Crossland, Tony Downing, Bryan Lodge, Bob McCann, Kevin Oxley, Gail Smith, and Ann Woolhouse. Members of the public were invited.

Before the presentation members of the public were invited to inspect the plans. Many members of the public were shocked and disappointed that Plot F had been reintroduced to the plans. Also, there was a discrepancy with regard to the size of plot F. It looks about the same size as plot E. Many members of the public asked the question: How could you build 150 new properties on a plot about the same size as plot E with only 74 new properties, can you explain? I enclose a google screen shot which shows the progress of development of plot E and the outline of plot F.



This document <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/PlanningObjections12thApril2023.pdf> is taken from the transcripts of the Sheffield City Council South East Local Area Committee Meeting held 11 January 2023. Full transcripts are available from Sheffield South East (LAC). In this exchange I question you regarding the reintroduction of Plot F. I also explained my conversation with Inspector O S Woodward's at his inquiry held on 12-15, 19, and 21 January 2021 Site visit made on 20 January 2021.

(Michael Meredith) – "I suggested to O S Woodward's planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State, that Avant homes move their project to Norton Aerodrome. Sheffield City Council's barrister said that he thought it was a good idea. I explained that Sheffield City Council were already receiving funding from the government for Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature under Natural England's Higher level stewardship arrangement. Also in this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbYXEDczL-U> with Sophie Ridge she interviews Secretary of State for Environment MP George Eustace he explains the government's response to UK floods: An extra £4 Billion to be spent on flood defences. Also, the Environment Secretary, Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission and Natural England have jointly committed to “nature-based solutions to tackle the climate emergency and stop downstream flooding.” I suggested that Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail would qualify for funding. I still believe it would.

This is a copy of my objection to building on plot F: [Friends of Ecological Owlthorpe Object to building on plot F](#)

I believe there is government funding to redevelop the Norton Aerodrome. Sheffield City Council’s barrister thought it was an extremely good idea. And thanked me for endeavouring to obtain funding from two different Government funding pots.

Roland Bolton, Strategic Planning Research Unit, Mrs Stephens, Sheffield City Council and Mrs Hull, Sheffield City Council proclaimed that Norton Aerodrome is a greenfield site so Avant Home could not transfer to that site. I disagreed. I explained that there were many derelict buildings in need of demolition. I also explained that many of the buildings contained asbestos and that the MOD may be responsible for the removal. Reported in Sheffield Star March 29th 2021 “Demolition finally gets underway at former air base.” Buildings have now been removed, so there is no reason why Avant Homes cannot remove their project to the Aerodrome at Norton.

I was happy with the news that Sheffield (LPA) has now included the Norton Aerodrome in the Draft Sheffield Plan. This is a good site for redevelopment with the proposal to build 270 new properties. I am interested in architecture. I hope the new properties will take full advantage of Government Legislation which states all new properties will be equipped with Electric charging points. The Government has also passed a law which states all properties with Solar technology and battery storage facilities will be able to sell excess electricity back to the grid. With energy costs spiralling out of control would it not be prudent to have all 270 new properties fitted with this technology?

Under the freedom of information Act, I have asked many questions of Government departments. Evidence can be seen here: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/letters.htm> I have not been satisfied with Inspector O S Woodward's Inquiry. I have made a formal complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman. I have also been through the Planning inspectorate’s internal enquiry. They are aware I am still not satisfied. Copies of my complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman have been sent to Clive Betts MP. I also contacted Michael Johnson the Head of Planning, Sheffield City Council to inform him of my communication with the Ombudsman, here is his reply: “Dear Mr Meredith, I am writing to thank you for sending the below correspondence and to confirm we will respond fully with any Ombudsman enquiry that is forthcoming. Kind regards Michael”

Research under the freedom of information Act shows that Sheffield City Council have been receiving Government funding: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/InformationRightsTeam31stMarch2022.pdf>

This is the map, <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/HigherLevelStewardshipAgreementMap.pdf> I have been using it shows the areas of maintenance of hedgerows/ ditches/ grassland and wetland of very high environmental value. Although payments have been made Local residents will confirm that the maintenance has not taken place. In the document: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/EO-14NicolaDempysustainability-11-00360-v2.pdf>

I provided to Inspector O S Woodward at the inquiry I have highlighted in yellow, the cutbacks in parks department staff. This may be the reason for the lack of maintenance. But this does not explain what happened to the Government funds? Residents of Owlthorpe are at a loss to understand why Sheffield City Council wish to destroy our Oasis. Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail should be preserved just like Porter Brook or the Botanical Gardens. Please look at our visitors guide: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/directionsmaps.htm>

Mining in Owlthorpe

Many local residents have been concerned regarding building over old mine workings that are in a constant state of flooding. When the mines were in operation water had to be pumped out to stop the miners from drowning.

Under the freedom of information Act, I have asked many questions of the Coal Authority. Questions and answers can be seen here: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/letters.htm> Under the title Coal Authority.

In this Coal Authority Mining Report: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/CD2.27%20-%20App%20submission%202023.8.19%20-%20Coal%20Mining%20Report%20-%20Mining%20Report%208718.pdf> presented to Inspector O S Woodward at the enquiry, there is no mention that the mines are in a constant state of flooding. Also, **Opencast coal mining Past** “The property is not within the boundary of an opencast site from which coal has been removed by opencast methods.” This statement is not true. Under the freedom of information act I

have received this document [https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/19_03143_FUL-COAL_AUTHORITY-1401550%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/19_03143_FUL-COAL_AUTHORITY-1401550%20(2).pdf) This document was not presented to Inspector O S Woodward at the enquiry. Can you explain why?

The Coal authority seem to have amended their records regarding:

“Brook Lane Opencast Mine: The reference to coal at or near the surface is a direct result of coal outcrop of the Flockton (also named Chavery) seam running west to east through the middle of the Owlthorpe area. The seam dips in a northerly direction beneath Owlthorpe. As with most coal outcrops there is a high likelihood that it may have been worked at some point in the past due to the easy accessibility of the coal. This is further endorsed by the fact that the former Brook Lane opencast immediately to the north-west was worked over the outcrop.”

Workmen were seen working on the drains on Moss Way. I asked the Coal authority if the workmen were from the Coal Authority they said not and referred me to the Environment Agency. In reply to my (Question 2) Answer from Environment Agency: “2. This site is 1.5km upstream of the main river (Environment Agency maintained river) so it is unlikely that Environment Agency staff would have been in this area as it is outside of our remit from a flood risk perspective. The river here is classed as an ordinary watercourse and will be the responsibility of Sheffield City Council.” Abandoned mines can be a significant source of pollution. Prolonged wet weather can cause rising mine water underground to dramatically ‘blowout’, discharging to the surface and bringing with it years of accumulated ochre that turn watercourses orange. This video: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/Water.mp4> was taken from behind Crystal Peaks. This was not surface water; the Ochre Dyke was running crystal clear from the Culvert under Moor Valley down past edenthorpe.

I have a number of Questions I would like to ask you under the freedom of information Act.

Question 1: We are aware that vast quantities of coal were taken from under Owlthorpe and delivered to the power station at Blackburn meadows power station. Although the Coal Authority states “The property is in the likely zone of influence from workings in 2 seams of coal at 60m to 180m depth.”

In the Reports from Lithos Consulting; Probe hole Log 18 Strata Wet between **14.2m and 18m**, heavy water inflow below **14.8m** depth. Probe Hole Log 21 Strata wet between **17.5m and 18.2m** depth. Probe Hole Log 22 Strata wet between **16.8m and 17.4m** depth. Probe Hole 24 Heavy water inflow from **20.5m depth**. The reports from Lithos Probe hole Logs show heavy water much nearer the surface than 60m. Many of the Probe Hole Log’s show surface coal is present at most locations. The steep terrain of Owlthorpe could be the reason Heavy Water is showing at a lesser level.

Could you make available the records of mining under Owlthorpe to help us understand why mine water is showing at 14.8 meters and 20.5 meters?

Question 2: Can you explain why this document: [https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/19_03143_FUL-COAL_AUTHORITY-1401550%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/19_03143_FUL-COAL_AUTHORITY-1401550%20(2).pdf) was not made available at the Inspectors Inquiry? This document shows the outcrop of surface coal.

Property Development in South Sheffield.

There have been many comments regarding the fact that the land in south Sheffield has been heavily over developed. With the development of Crystal Peaks, Aldi, Asda, Morrisons and many more plus many new housing estates the area is saturated.

Question 3: Can you supply records of the payments made by Sheffield City Council when purchasing the land in south Sheffield?

Question 4: Were there any covenant documents attached to the purchase of this land?

The band width of properties on The Owlthorpe Nexus development suggests that Sheffield City council can expect a yield of approx.: £250,000 per Annum from the 74 properties. If plot F is developed Sheffield City council can expect a yield of approx.: £500,000 per Annum from the 150 properties.

Question 5: Can you supply copies of the annual income Sheffield City Council receive from all the new estates including residential and commercial from the land purchased in South Sheffield?

There is a problem with the lack of social housing in Sheffield. I believe this was caused by MP Margeret Thatcher's Government. MP Margeret Thatcher forced Sheffield City Council to sell off council properties to sitting tenants at a fraction of the market costs. This has left Sheffield City Council bereft of social Housing. Both councillors and MPs have to beg property developers to include social housing in their developments.

At this moment in time there is an opportunity to address this situation. At the inspector's enquiry I suggested that Sheffield (LPA) had paid too much attention to the development of student accommodating and neglected social housing. I was pleased to hear you say that Sheffield (LPA) are looking to increase city centre social housing. Covid has shown us that working from home on-line is possible. Many University lectures continue to teach student on line, also many companies have found that they no longer need expensive office space. Staff can work flexible hours this helps staff with small children. Many retail companies have closed down such as John Lewis and Debenhams, others are struggling. Many postgraduate students explain they do not want to live in the suburbs' but would prefer to rent properties in the city centre. The advantages are no transport costs. Retail shops on hand, restaurants and pubs close by. I suggest that Sheffield (LPA) take a survey to see if interest is there to build the quantity of new homes the government wants but in the city centre, not the suburbs.

Thank you for your attention

Kind regards

Michael Meredith