

# Planning

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to Jayne.Foulds

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**Jayne Foulds**  
**Local Area Committee Manager – South East**  
People Portfolio  
Sheffield City Council

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Dear Jayne,

Thank you for your email dated 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023 regarding my questions, I look forward to hearing from Planning and Housing Growth services.

With regards to Clive Betts MP, I was referring to questions and requests made at the previous Sheffield South East meetings. To help you understand my position, I think it is best for me to explain.

Originally Sheffield (LPA) wished to build 500 properties' in Owlthorpe. Planning permission was refused on a number of occasions, but Clive Betts MP has always wished to build in Owlthorpe and has presented evidence in favour of building in Owlthorpe at several planning meetings.

Prior to the last SCC (LPA) inquiry dated 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020, I requested on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020 that the Secretary of State for the Environment "call in" the application. My request was in line with government legislation which states that applications have to be made before the local planning Authority makes its final decision. The decision to refuse the planning application by Sheffield City Council Planning & Highways Committee took place 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020 so therefore my application was submitted in time.

In my original complaint to Howard Baxter Dated: 9<sup>th</sup> February 2020 Re: Planning Application 19/03143/FUL, After the devastating flooding in Fishlake November 2019, my complaint was primarily about how to stop downstream **Flooding**.

In an interview with Sophie Ridge <https://youtu.be/bbYXEDczL-U> in February 2020, George Eustace explained that the government's approach to UK flood prevention would consist of an extra £4bn spending on flood defences but also in Yorkshire the creation and support of upstream nature-based solutions. In addition, as reported in a government press release on 23 January 2020, the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission and Natural England have jointly committed to "nature-based solutions to tackle the climate emergency", to which Ecological Owlthorpe has the potential to make an excellent contribution.

Please read my editorial in Yorkshire By-lines: <https://yorkshirebylines.co.uk/region/working-with-nature-sheffield-campaign-calls-for-protection-of-upstream-environments/>

I also reminded Howard Baxter that the Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail, the Moorhole Lane Trail, the Ochre Dyke, the Woodland Fringe and Owlthorpe Grassland Grazing Project were opened with an official event on March 16th 2012 by children from three local primary schools assisted by David Caufield - Sheffield City Council Officer, Clive Betts MP for Sheffield South East and Sheffield City Councillor Helen Mirfin-Boukouris. **However, I forgot to remind Howard Baxter that Sheffield City Council have been receiving Government funds in support for this project.**

In my opinion the refusal document Howard Baxter presented to O S Woodward of the planning Inspectorate does not reflect the decisions made at Sheffield City Council Planning & Highways Committee which took place 2nd June 2020 and I complained to the Planning Inspector O S Woodward about this. As a result, in order for me to review the meeting, Sheffield City Council Barrister Guy Williams organised the retrieval of the video which had been taken down from the council's website. This was organised by Lucy Bond, Area Team Manager (City Centre & East Team) Development Management City Growth Department. **Extracts:** from my review of Sheffield City Council Planning & Highways Committee which took place 2nd June 2020. "Many councillors explained that it is a wildlife site and did not understand why it had been split up into units C, D, E and F. Why were the sites not sold as one? **It seems in deliberation that Sheffield (LPA) did not want an Ecology Impact Assessment.** By selling them off separately they could avoid this type of assessment. 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 to 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 citing 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 Highways impact into this as a reason for refusal and that risk is that you effectively neutralise the site in residential terms."** Highways impact was removed from the legal document. I believe both the Secretary of State and the planning inspector O S Woodward were misled. (Video evidence of Sheffield City Council Planning & Highways Committee which took place 2nd June 2020 is available on request.)

In accordance with complaints procedures at planning inspectorate I have exchanged a number of correspondences but I am still not satisfied with their responses. Dated: 5th May 2021 I made a formal complaint to The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. Copies to all concerned parties including Clive Betts MP and 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"

21<sup>st</sup> July 2021 I received this heavily redacted document from Planning inspectorate, many weeks after the decision to build was granted by Inspector O S Woodward. (Original copy is available.)

Sent: 01 December 2020 09:00

"Thanks for this, I've reviewed and I agree this doesn't need to be recovered. **It's a very small development, and the MP isn't requesting recovery.**

We have a recovery request for an appeal in Sheffield for erection of **74 no. dwellings**, formation of access road, associated landscaping works, open space works and flood storage works. The Inquiry is due to open on 12th Jan. The request (for call-in read recovery) comes from Mr Meredith and has been made to DEFRA (no doubt will eventually find its way to us via Despatch Box) but also forwarded to us by Mr Meredith. **I've enclosed the LPA's refusal reasons** along with LPA and Appellant statements. There is also a Rule 6 party - Owlthorpe Fields Action Group. At application stage there were 330 letters of representation from third parties and objections from Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Owlthorpe Fields Action Group and Clive Betts MP. Around 100 on appeal including the **MP again (but not asking for recovery – see his letter enclosed). I don't think this would need to be recovered but grateful for your views."**

It was very disappointing to see that plot (F) in Owlthorpe has now been re-introduced to the Sheffield (HELAA). With a proposal to build 150 new properties. If allowed to proceed this project would completely destroy the Owlthorpe Grassland Grazing Project which is a major component of the award winning Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail.

Although I have followed all government procedures, I am informed by staff at the Parliamentary Ombudsman's office that in order for my complaint to proceed, Protocol states that my complaint has to be presented by my MP Clive Betts.

I formally request that you ask MP Clive Betts to present my complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman in order to activate my complaint.

Kind Regards

Michael Meredith

PS.

At a previous Sheffield South East Local Area Committee public meeting I asked the question?

## Question: Is Democracy Dead?

Unelected civil servants in planning departments and the planning inspectorate are undermining decisions made by democratically elected Councillors and Members of Parliament, who speak on behalf of their constituents. For democracy to work Parliament needs to ACT and support decisions made on behalf of the electorate.

Feedback from many councillors support my concerns.

Please could you forward this e-mail to all concerned parties including all Sheffield South East Councillors and Simon Vincent, Sheffield Council's strategic planning service manager.

Attachments enclosed:

<http://ecological-owlthorpe.org/images/Grazing.jpg>

<http://ecological-owlthorpe.org/images/Enterance.jpg>

<http://ecological-owlthorpe.org/images/Mining123.jpg>

<http://ecological-owlthorpe.org/images/Farm.jpg>

<http://ecological-owlthorpe.org/ParliamentaryOmbudsman.pdf>

<http://ecological-owlthorpe.org/ParliamentaryOmbudsmanTwo.pdf>

Additional Attachments;

<http://ecological-owlthorpe.org/HigherLevelStewardshipAgreementMap.pdf>

[http://ecological-owlthorpe.org/3258555%20email%20PCU%20redacted%20\(10\).pdf](http://ecological-owlthorpe.org/3258555%20email%20PCU%20redacted%20(10).pdf)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbYXEDczL-U>

Preview YouTube video George eustice over UK floods with sophy ridge

