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Open Letter for the attention of Kurtis Crossland,
Chair of the Sheffield South East Local Area Committee

Dated: 26th February 2024,

Dear Kurtis, this is a statement / questions from Michael Meredith,

I request these statements/questions be read out and included in the minutes for the Sheffield South East (LAC) Thursday 29th February 2024. I also request a full copy of the minutes of the meeting.

For those who do not know me my name is Michael Meredith. I have been associated with Owlthorpe for about 67 years. As a child I visited my cousins, we explored Birley Woods, climbed trees and visited the header waters of the Ochre Dyke where we searched for frogs, frog spurn and newts.

My Aunty gave us strict instructions not to venture down Dent Lane. That is where Birley Wood pits were. Aunty explained it was far too dangerous with many lorries delivering thousands of tons of coal to the power station at Meadowhall and other coal outlets.

Whilst the pits where open water had to be pumped out to stop the miners from drowning. It is the Ochre in the mine water that gives the Ochre Dyke its name.

My wife and I moved into Royston Avenue Owlthorpe in 1990. One of the main things that attracted us to the area is the lovely walks on our doorstep. The peace and tranquillity of being able to enjoy a walk away from roads, the noise and pollution of traffic. To see nature at its best is wonderful.

When we first moved in there were many Badger sets in the woodland. Badgers were seen regularly playing near our house. That was until we heard over several nights' gunshots. We thought that it was the farmer shouting foxes that had attacked his hens, this was until a dog walker explained they had been walking the dog early in the morning and saw three well-dressed men carrying high villosity rifles and many dead badgers, which they loaded into their Landover and drove off. Who were they? One resident of Owlthorpe explained that Sheffield (LPA) had originally wanted to build our estate all the way over plot F but the badger sets were a problem which stopped their project.

I have attended many Sheffield Council meetings where permission to build in Owlthorpe has been refused.

In accordance with the Law of the land, dated 26th May 2020 I requested that the Secretary of State for Environment call in the application made by Avant homes as I did not think it complied with Government policies regarding Climate Change and flood defences. Evidence of my endeavours to save Owlthorpe from property development can be seen on our website: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/letters.htm> This page shows all the Questions and answers I have asked and received of government bodies under the freedom of information Act.

I have not been satisfied with the excuses from the Planning Inspectorate, and I have reported Inspector O S Woodward to the Parliamentary Ombudsman. This complaint is still ongoing.

Dated: 9th January 2024 my intake Caseworker at Parliamentary Ombudsman services explains they will accept evidence that has come to light after the enquiry.

Dated: 5th October 2023 Sheffield South East (LAC) meeting. <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/Printed%20minutes%2005102023%201830%20South%20East%20Local%20Area%20Committee.pdf>

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

6.1 The committee received 1 question in advance of the meeting. The Chair (Councillor Kurtis Crossland) stated that this question along with the response will be included in the minutes.

6.2 Roger Marsh

Extracts from minutes of the meeting: “The agreement that we had with SCC was that we would be supported in this environmental work on the understanding that we would not carry out any work or object to the building of houses on Sites C, D, and E.”

“Celia Jackson, then Secretary of the Moss Valley Wildlife Group, presented a petition to have Site F removed as a planned housing site. SCC agreed to her petition and accordingly removed Site F as housing land from the current Local Plan.”

“Subsequently Roger Marsh lobbied SCC to get the release of outstanding Section 106 monies (retained by the builder of Woodland Heights housing development at Owlthorpe for 10 years). Once the £67,455 Section 106 monies had been released, we completed many planned environmental projects.”

“A large proportion of this work was paid for by grants from Sheffield South East Ward Pots.”

It seems to me that some members of Sheffield City Council & Sheffield City (LPA) were using funds to blackmail Roger Marsh’s group to stand aside whilst they prosecuted their plans to develop plot C, D and E. **Who are they, and what are their motivations?**

This new evidence has helped us understand why Sheffield City Council (LPA) pushed so hard to develop site E. The planning inspectorate’s inquiry took part in the middle of the Covid pandemic. Evidence was presented by video conferencing except for the site visit.

At an internal enquiry into the conduct of Planning Inspector O S Woodward regarding Inquiry about plot E in Owlthorpe, held on 12-15, 19, and 21 January 2021 **Site visit made on 20 January 2021**. Although mentioned in his decision notice Inspector O S Woodward said he had lost his notes about the site visit. This is not acceptable conduct. In my opinion Inspector O S Woodward site visit should not have taken place until the covid pandemic was over. Both the Prime Minister and the Chancellor were fined for breaking covid restrictions. Inspector O S Woodward ignored Government restrictions. It makes you wonder what other Government restrictions; did he ignore. My reports can be seen on our website: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/publicinquiry.htm> reference the site visit: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/EO-19SitevisitWednesday20thJanuary2021.pdf>

11th January 2023 I attended the Sheffield South East (LAC) Meeting: “7. DRAFT SHEFFIELD PLAN 7.1 The Committee received a presentation from Simon Vincent, Strategic Planning and Service Manager, Planning Service, on progress regarding the Draft Sheffield Plan.

Extracts: I was the second Questionnaire. As this was the first time, we had heard that plot F had been reintroduced to the Draft Sheffield Plan and plot C and D had been removed. I had many questions for Simon Vincent. I also made a formal complaint <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/PlanningObjections12thJanuary2023.pdf>

9. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS 9.1 The Chair advised that questions had been submitted in writing from Mr Michael Meredith. Mr Meredith would receive answers to these questions in writing. Mr Meredith advised that he still awaited written answers to previous questions submitted. The Chair assured Mr Meredith that answers would be provided in writing. The only correspondence I have had from Karen McGowan Chair Sheffield South East Local Area Committee is this one <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/emailfromKarenMcGowan.pdf> this is my reply to Karen McGowan: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/ReplytoKarenMcGowan.pdf> at the end of my communication, “I formally request that the topic of Building in Owlthorpe is scheduled for a meeting as early as can be arranged. I have every confidence that you will notify all residents of Owlthorpe in advance of such a meeting.

Thank you. Kind Regards Michael Meredith.” **Dated:25th February 2024 no such meeting has been arranged. Can Karen McGowan explain why I have still not received answers to my Questions and no meeting has been organised?**

I have exchanged communications with Simon Vincent. Under the freedom of information act I have asked many questions. Which can be seen here: <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/ToSimonVincent4thFeb2024.pdf> I am still looking for answers.

Although protocol states that you can bring your complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman via your MP, my Intake Caseworker is aware that MP Clive Betts although requests have been made on many occasions my MP Clive Betts has not forwarded my complaint. In the last entrance, of my communication with MP Clive Betts dated: 24th August 2023, I requested yet again, “Clive, I ask again, please sign off on my request to the Parliamentary Ombudsman so he can start his enquiries. Thank you for your Attention Kind Regards Michael Meredith”

I am reliably informed by my Intake Caseworker if MP Clive Betts continues to block my complaint, I must report him to: <https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financial-interests/parliamentary-commissioner-for-standards/complaints-and-investigations/>

Thank You for your attention
Kind Regards
Michael Meredith