

Dear Councillors, and particular the Chair Peter Rippon thank you for allowing us to speak today against the development of Owlthorpe Fields. I'm speaking on behalf of Owlthorpe Fields Action Group.

As you know, the land at Owlthorpe was allocated for housing in 1960's; in the 1980's, Sheffield Council produced a brochure announcing that the Owlthorpe township would have a school, a doctors, a link road, a park & shops. The doctors exists but all the rest has been forgotten in favour of a sprawl of houses.

The Design Brief for the site states that the development Sites C, D and E, should be considered as a 'whole' to ensure comprehensive development. This hasn't happened and if this development goes ahead, we will end up with the fragmented development of Owlthorpe Fields.

This is not placemaking. Placemaking capitalises on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well-being. The Avant proposal does none of these things. The development absolutely fails to create any sense of place and does not meet NPPF Para 127. We must not squander land, degrade biodiversity, have layouts which often fail to meet their objectives of promoting walking and cycling and damage landscapes. New developments are often not communities in any sense at all – they are merely agglomerations of the sprawl developments around a town.

The planning officer's report gives greatest weight to anything pro-development and medium weight to anything pro-biodiversity. In these times of climate change, biodiversity loss, pandemics and a mental health crisis, we should be striving for good, sustainable developments that put the wellbeing of people, open spaces and biodiversity ahead of profits.

The main reason for the development seems to be that it is in an area allocated for housing, but that is based on assumptions from an out of date UDP and Core Strategy which conflict with each other and the NPPF. It's not possible to come to a well-judged and reasoned planning decision based on policy documents that are contradictory and out of date.

You are being led to believe the location of this development is sustainable, it's not. Packed trams, highly congested roads (as mentioned in nearly every objection and the Councils own design brief), a bus service that's a kilometre walk from the site (as is the supermarket) and over a mile walk to the nearest school. The existing cycle trails are minimal to non-existent.

Following the closure of Pennine foods (local to the site), opportunities for local employment are limited and people will inevitably have to get into their cars and travel. NPPF para 8 lists 3 overarching principles for achieving a sustainable development; an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective and this development fails all on these principles.

This development also goes against at least 3 Council policies & strategies; Open Spaces, Trees and Woodland Strategy, and the declared climate emergency.

I will give quick summary of other policies we believe have not been met:

On community involvement at pre-application stage: Para 128 of the NPPF states early involvement of the local community is vital, this has not taken place! There are at least 2,500 houses around the fields and Avant Homes sent just 112 pre-application letters out. The Officer's report says the letter included an invitation to a meeting at Owlthorpe Medical Centre. This is factually incorrect, we were not. [I have a copy if you want to see].

The Site is currently rural in character being former farmland. This development would add to the urban sprawl, and would have a negative impact upon the character of the area. This is supported by UDP Policy BE18. Although the development site is not Green Belt, it's adjacent to it and would fundamentally affect and change the nature of the Green Belt in the area. Policies CS72, GE2 and GE4 support this.

The proposed location of the children's play area is unsuitable. This is supported by policy H16 of the UDP particularly that the play area will only be visible from one or two houses.

No comprehensive drainage strategy has been completed and no hydrological impact assessment considered on the Ochre Dyke woodland bordering the development Site. The development profoundly risks the Veteran and Ancient Trees and flora in Ochre Dyke through changes in groundwater from pollutants and hydrology. NPPF para 175 explicitly states that development resulting in deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (including ancient and veteran trees) should be refused unless for wholly exceptional reasons, for example, national infrastructure projects.

Hedgerows play an integral part in defining the historical landscape of the Owlthorpe Area and most pre-date the Parliamentary Enclosures Act. These hedgerows should be maintained and protected as heritage assets. The hedgerow adjacent to the proposed attenuation pond has additional historical importance as it was also the old parish boundary between Beighton and Eckington Parish. NPPF Para 190 supports this.

Thank you and any questions.