

My name is Sandra Fretwell-Smith and I am a resident of Owlthorpe. I'd like to voice my concerns regarding ecology and the detrimental effect on health and wellbeing should this planning application be approved.

I am going to use my time today to hopefully make you reflect on your impending decision and portray the feelings of the people who love this area. Over the 20 or so years since the Woodland Heights estate was built the land north of the development, identified as Sites, C, D and E, have rewilded with numerous self-set trees, shrubs and wildflowers flourishing. This has provided excellent hunting, foraging and nesting habitats for many mammals, birds and invertebrates, some of which are protected; the species count being far greater than is reflected in the Ecological Impact Assessment undertaken by BWB. Indeed the Ecological Impact assessment only covers the area known as Site E but the planning officer himself states on page 33 of his summary report that:

"The site forms part of a wider Owlthorpe housing development area which is expected to deliver approximately another 160 houses."

As Sheffield Council have made it very clear that they intend to develop the additional 2 sites the ecological Impact Assessment should be conducted over the 3 sites as a whole. The mitigation measures suggested by BWB will have little benefit when taken in context of the future development sites.

As such, the current ecological Impact assessment is insufficient to provide a clear indication of the impact and total biodiversity loss of the whole area.

Sites C, D and E represent the wider foraging and hunting habitat for the local wildlife, and they know no boundaries.

This ties in with the biodiversity calculator, which again should be taken in context of the three sites together. However, despite governmental or local policies it is ludicrous to imagine you can compensate the wildlife fiscally for their loss of habitat, neither is planting a few trees and shrubs elsewhere going to help the local wildlife population when they can no longer use their hunting/nesting and foraging grounds.

This brings me on to a topical and increasingly important issue. A recent study by the University of California in March 2020, has shown that human encroachment into animal habitats is increasing the risk of new infectious diseases such as Covid-19, it concludes that "the causes of wildlife population declines have facilitated the transmission of animal viruses to humans".

Habitat destruction threatens vast numbers of wild species with extinction. It also forces those wild species that remain to cram into smaller fragments of dwindling habitat thus increasing the likelihood that they'll come into repeated, intimate contact with the local human population. It's this kind of repeated, intimate contact that allows the viruses that live harmlessly in their bodies to cross over into ours, transforming benign animal virus into deadly human pathogens.

Here in Sheffield we have all been touched by Covid-19 in one way or another. You may have lost a loved one, been a key worker or indeed contracted the virus yourself. The impact on our daily life has been immeasurable and the death toll devastating. Biodiversity experts have stressed that habitat destruction is one of the major risk factors for public health and a big driver in the emergence of viruses such as Covid-19 and Ebola. Had this planning meeting gone ahead late last year the committee would no doubt have dismissed what I have just said as the words of a Nimby, wildlife obsessed local resident. None of you could legitimately accuse me of that now. We need to find ways to co-exist safely with wildlife. We cannot simply

eliminate all wildlife where it doesn't fit in with local or government policies; it will undoubtedly come back to bite us one way or another, either through a lack of food due to a massive decline in the worlds pollinators or through transmitted disease.

During the covid-19 lockdown many of the residents have utilised Owlthorpe fields for their daily exercise. It has been beneficial for both mental and physical health. More and more residents have appreciated the birds, butterflies and wildflowers that now cover this area. Where will they exercise when this is gone? I respectfully ask that the planning committee reflects on the events of the past 4 months and consider what sort of world they want their grandchildren to live in. Owlthorpe may only appear to be a small suburban area of Sheffield but this is happening all over the country and worldwide. I understand that additional housing is required throughout Sheffield and the rest of the UK but as stated previously a balance needs to be struck between the need to increase housing capacity and co-existing safely with wildlife, as they have no shortages of viruses to give us. At the very least Sheffield Council should be looking to develop all available brownfield sites before contemplating previously unused greenfield or greenbelt sites.

- 1. Christine K Johnson et al, Global Shifts in Mammalian Population Trends Reveal Key Predictors of Virus Spillover Risk, University of California, Published March 2020***

Para 3.25 Local Wildlife Site

Fencing off part of the Local Wildlife site to provide a sanctuary for breeding birds and wildlife.