



# Owlthorpe Fields Action Group

## Request for Formal Green Space Designation for Owlthorpe Fields

On behalf of the communities of Owlthorpe, Hackenthorpe, Mosborough and Waterthorpe, we are writing to request that in the new Local Plan currently being prepared for Sheffield, that Owlthorpe Fields are formally designated as Green Space, protected from development.

As Sheffield doesn't have a procedure for a Green Spaces application, we have used the definition from the latest version of the NPPF to guide this application and produce a checklist:

*101. The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.*

*102. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:*

*(a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*

*(b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*

*(c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.*

### Introduction

“Green infrastructure contributes to the quality and distinctiveness of the local environment. It creates opportunities for walking and physical activity and generally adding to quality of life. Green infrastructure is diverse in character and can include formal parks and gardens, informal grassed areas, linear paths, towpaths, sports pitches and various other kinds of landscaped area. For many local communities, securing high quality green infrastructure in and around their neighbourhood is important.”

We believe Owlthorpe Fields meets all these criteria and those of NPPF para 101 and 102 and we have assembled a pack of evidence (checklist and document list below) to support this application.



## Green Spaces Checklist

### AREA OF APPLICATION

Fields known locally as Owlthorpe Fields, Hanging Lea Woods and Ochre Dyke Woods (Bluebell Wood), including the existing 'kick pitch' and SUDs pond. Known by Sheffield Council as Owlthorpe Sites C and D in Sheffield Councils' Core strategy dated 2009. Please refer to accompanying paperwork, Owlthorpe Document 1, for this application area. Map ref approx. SK418 826.

<b>CRITERIA AND REASON FOR PROTECTION - OVERVIEW</b>	<p>Owlthorpe Fields are an important wildlife habitat, easily meeting the criteria to be designated as a Local Wildlife Site for Grassland Habitat (a priority habitat for Sheffield). Many red listed &amp; priority species have been recorded.</p> <p>The Fields are used extensively for recreational purposes and are an attractive open green area with abundant wildlife. Public footpaths run within the sites and several informal footpaths are used daily by local people.</p> <p>The application area has historical significance as it contains a Pre-Enclosure Act hedgerow, an historic Parish Boundary, Ancient Woodlands and has a history of mining. Immediately adjacent to the Fields, stigmara fossils are regularly found along with other fossils and pottery.</p>
<b>IS THE GREEN SPACE IN REASONABLY CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE COMMUNITY IT SERVES?</b>	<b>YES.</b> <p>Owlthorpe Fields is immediately adjacent to housing (less than 100m in all directions) and therefore the communities it serves. (Please refer to accompanying map, Owlthorpe Document 1, with distances to housing identified).</p>
<b>IS THE GREEN SPACE DEMONSTRABLY SPECIAL TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND HOLD A PARTICULAR LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE?</b>	<b>YES.</b> <p>Owlthorpe Fields are used extensively by walkers and runners for recreation, watching and photographing wildlife to name a few things. We have provided 132 statements from local people explaining how special Owlthorpe Fields are to them and how they are used.</p> <p>(Please refer to accompanying paperwork, Owlthorpe Document 2).</p>



<b>ARE THERE SIGNIFICANT VIEWS FROM THE LOCAL AREA INTO OR ACROSS THE SITE?</b>	<b>YES.</b> Owlthorpe Fields form an open green, attractive space towards the bottom of Mosborough Moor. The Fields can be seen from adjacent communities and hills, and when looking from Donetsk Way / Moss Way / Hackenthorpe, there are extensive views of the Fields. (Please refer to accompanying paperwork Owlthorpe Document 1).
<b>DOES THE SITE HAVE SPECIAL HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE OR FEATURES?</b>	<b>YES.</b> The areas contain a Pre-Enclosure Act hedgerow, an historic Parish boundary dating back to at least 1860, Ancient Woodlands & an Ancient Bridleway. There is a history of mining, charcoal pits and bell pits in and around the area too. Immediately adjacent to Owlthorpe Fields, 300-million-year-old stigmara fossils are regularly found along with other fossils and pottery. It is highly likely that the same fossils would be found on Owlthorpe Fields if the vegetation was not there as coal seams are present.
<b>DOES THE SITE HAVE RECREATIONAL VALUE?</b>	<b>YES.</b> Attached are 132 statements from local people, who have explained how they use the green space and how the area makes them feel. (Please refer to the accompanying paperwork Owlthorpe Document 2).
<b>IS THE SITE PARTICULARLY TRANQUIL?</b>	<b>YES.</b> Although semi-urban, when 'lost' in the middle of the Fields, one could be in the middle of nowhere - little traffic noise and instead just the sounds of wildlife. Many of the 132 statements state how tranquil the area is - quoting from a couple of people:  "I use the fields for walking, taking pictures of wildlife and for the tranquillity."  "I walk weekly with my friend to relax and put the world to rights in a tranquil, beautiful environment"



<b>DOES THE SITE HAVE ECOLOGICAL VALUE?</b>	<b>YES.</b>  In the last 2 years, local people have recorded 842 species, including 67 species of birds (34 of which are either specially protected, red, amber or priority species); there are 4 different types of orchids, 90 species of moth & 19 species of butterfly. The sites easily meet LWS criteria for grassland habitat - a priority for Sheffield. The application area includes 2 ancient woodlands and around 30 trees on the Ancient Tree Inventory. Roe deer, badgers & hedgehogs are regularly seen; six species of bats have been recorded, 3 of which are a priority species and over 80 species of fungi have been recorded too. Local people are not experts and only identify species while out walking, but all sightings have been verified by experts and are available for scrutiny. A summary report of the findings to date is provided in the accompanying paperwork Owlthorpe Document 3, with other evidence provided in Owlthorpe Documents 5, 6 and 7.
<b>DOES THE SITE FORM A SIGNIFICANT GREEN BREAK WITHIN THE SETTLEMENT?</b>	<b>YES.</b>  The green space is surrounded by housing on 3 sides.
<b>IS THERE EVIDENCE DEMONSTRATING THAT THE SITE IS SPECIAL TO LOCAL PEOPLE?</b>	<b>YES.</b>  Please refer to the 132 statements from local people supporting the designation of Owlthorpe Fields as Local Green Space (Owlthorpe Document 2). They value the area and would like it to be protected from development. 300 people objected to the building on 'Site E' and another petition (not yet submitted) has over 1300 signatures on it requesting that Owlthorpe Fields be saved from further development. Owlthorpe Fields Action Group has thousands of followers across social media and an email database.
<b>IS THE GREEN AREA:</b> <b>a) LOCAL IN CHARACTER?</b> <b>b) AN EXTENSIVE TRACT OF LAND?</b>	a. <b>YES:</b> Clearly defined boundary with built up areas to the north, west and south. b. <b>NO:</b> The application area consists of two fields and designated ancient woodland with a total area of approximately 9.4 hectares.



<b>IS THERE PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE SITE?</b>	<b>YES.</b>  There are a number of formal and informal footpaths throughout the area. Please refer to Owlthorpe Document 4.
<b>SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	Owlthorpe Fields meet the NPPF criteria for designation as Local Green Space. As can be seen from the statements provided, the area is important for local people from children through to pensioners and everyone in-between.  During the last 20+ years, the fields have rewilded and are now home to a multitude of species (including many protected), and they also far exceed the minimum criteria to be designated as a Local Wildlife Site for grassland habitat.  The fields are an important space for the local communities, providing a tranquil and open area for people as well as being an important sanctuary for wildlife.

#### **Accompanying Paperwork with this Application Checklist**

- Green Space Application Checklist (This Document).
- OAG Report on Wildlife - Owlthorpe Document 3.
- Pictures Showing the Application Area and Distances to Houses – Owlthorpe Document 1.
- Community Statements – Owlthorpe Document 2.
- Photos and Views of the Fields - Owlthorpe Document 1.
- Footpaths Map (showing both informal & formal footpaths from footpaths.org) – Owlthorpe Document 4.
- LWS Application and Accompanying Paperwork - Owlthorpe Document 7 (Separate Folder).
- Spreadsheet with Species List - Owlthorpe Document 5.
- Slide show Photo Presentation of Priority Species - Owlthorpe Document 6.

*Please note: The statements contained in Owlthorpe Document 2 have been copied and pasted as they were sent, with EM = email, FB = Facebook, M = Messenger. All comments are available for viewing in their original format (as sent) if required.*