

B/27/SF/P

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

APPEAL

by

ENTREPRISES CHARLAMAND

Inspector: Mary A McClune DipTP MRTPI

Dates of Inquiry: 9, 10 and 11 July 1991

File No: APP/J4423/A/91/174886

Tollgate House  
Houlton Street  
BRISTOL  
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August 1991

To the Right Honourable Michael Heseltine MP  
Secretary of State for the Environment

Sir

1. I have the honour to report that on 9, 10 and 11 July 1991 I held an inquiry at the Old Town Hall, Sheffield, into an appeal by Entreprises Charlamand under Section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against the refusal of the Sheffield City Council to grant outline planning permission, all detailed matters reserved for subsequent approval, for residential and ancillary purposes and the construction of roads, on land bounded by Carr Road, Hollin Busk Lane and Broomfield Lane, Deepcar, South Yorkshire.

2. The reasons for refusal are:

1. The Local Planning Authority consider that the proposal would result in significant environmental intrusion and damage to the ecology of the area, particularly Fox Glen, thereby representing a serious reduction in the amenities currently enjoyed by a large number of people.

2. The proposal is contrary to policy 3.2.8 of the adopted Stocksbridge District Plan and it is considered that there are other sites in the locality which are suitable for residential development involving considerably less environmental intrusion and ecological damage.

3. This report includes a description of the appeal site and its surroundings, the gist of the representations made at the inquiry, and my conclusions and recommendations. Lists of appearances, documents, plans and photographs are attached.

4. On 27 June 1991, a statement was sent to the Planning Inspectorate by Mr Adamson, dealing with drainage, landscaping and ecological issues. This statement is on file. While the statement is described as being "agreed" between the appellants and the Council, it was clarified at the Inquiry that such a description applied only to the drainage issue in relation to the appeal site and Fox Glen, and the landscaping and ecological issues as they relate to Fox Glen. On this basis the Council withdrew that part of Reason for Refusal No 1 as it refers to Fox Glen, and also their evidence on drainage issues. The Council did not withdraw the remainder of Reason No 1, as they still consider this to be pertinent in the context of the appeal site.

#### THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

5. The appeal site is an irregularly shaped area of open land, extending to some 17.4 ha and bounded by Carr Road to the east, Hollin Busk Lane to the south and west and Broomfield Lane to the north. To the north-east is housing development in Deepcar and to the south-east a residential area known as Royd. Between these 2 areas is the deep, wooded valley known as Fox Glen. To the west and north-west of

the appeal site is residential development in Stocksbridge. To the south, on the opposite side of Hollin Busk Lane is, with the exception of a small market garden, open countryside. To the north, on the opposite side of Broomfield Lane, is a Youth Centre and an area of public open space, a public house, 2 modern bungalows and playing fields.

6. The appeal site is composed of a number of fields, used either for grazing or hay production and bounded by dry stone walls. There are few trees on the site. The ground is gently rolling with a shallow valley running across the site from the north-east to the south-west. The valley is more pronounced in the north-east where it joins Fox Glen. The valley was originally formed by a stream known as Clough Dike. This stream has been directed to run parallel to its original course, and slightly further to the south and at a higher level (Photo A). There was only a small water flow at the time of the site visit, but even so, the valley floor was in parts moist.

7. The fields to the south of Clough Dike are almost entirely used for grazing. Those to the north appear to be mainly used for hay and grazing. The stone walls, topography and uses all create a character typical of the hill farming landscape to be found in the Green Belt area to the south of Hollin Busk Lane.

8. Because of the altitude of the land and the elevation by about 1 m of Hollin Busk Lane above site level, there are extensive views all along the lane across the site from the south to the hills to the north. The main built-up areas of Deepcar and Stocksbridge lie over the crest of the hill and are not visible. Only the housing on the eastern and western perimeters of the site can be seen. The dense woodland in Fox Glen is a conspicuous landscape feature in this view. Further to the south in the Green Belt, looking from Cockshott Lane, there is an even more extensive panorama encompassing the appeal site and the high hills to the south.

9. From the north, on Broomfield Lane, the fields of the appeal site rise southwards to a crest, beyond which is the Clough Dike Valley. As a result, only this rising land can be seen, backed by the higher land in the Green Belt to the south of Hollin Busk Lane.

10. From the site, within the valley, the crest precludes views to the north but in the western part of the site, the open land to the south can be seen. As the valley deepens, views are enclosed by the sloping sides, to the north by fields and to the south by the steeper valley side and hedgerows (Photos B and D).

11. Fox Glen is a continuation of the appeal site valley but is much deeper and steeper, as well as being, for the most part densely wooded. The Glen is a long, narrow valley which runs eastwards as far as Wood Royd Road where it has been filled to allow construction of the road, a children's play area and houses. The northern side of the Glen, and part of the southern side, are bounded by the rear gardens of dwellings and accesses to the Glen have been created from some of the gardens.

12. From Wood Royd Road, the valley continues eastwards, Clough Dike ultimately being culverted and fed into the Little Don River.

13. Fox Glen, between the appeal site and Wood Royd Road is a public open space. Many years ago, the whole Glen was modelled and landscaped, with paths, ponds and weirs being created, as well as the provision of a band-stand and sown areas and shrubberies. Over the years the formal character has been replaced by natural vegetation, and the stream bed has become silted-up and in parts choked with debris. However the Glen remains a rural, attractive, woodland area for public enjoyment.

14. The ecology of the appeal site is very comprehensively described in Mr Browell's proof of evidence (Doc 10) and the report of the City Ecologist (Doc 15)

App 3). Mr Browell also presents a very helpful description of the landscape, hydrology and ecology of Fox Glen.

15. During the site inspection I also visited proposed housing sites at Oughtbridge and at Townend Lane in Deepcar. I also observed traffic conditions on Carr Road relating to the schools.

#### THE CASE FOR THE APPELLANTS

The material points are:

16. The appeal application was formulated and submitted wholly in conformity with existing development plans and Government Guidance. Submission followed extensive discussions with the Council, resulting in amendments to meet the requirements of the Council. Despite these effects, the application was refused, against the advice of the professional officers (Annex 7, Grounds of Appeal). Members have not appeared at the Inquiry to support their refusal.

17. Subsequently agreement has been reached on the drainage aspects of the proposals and the Council has agreed on this basis, to withdraw that part of Reason for Refusal No 1 which relates to ecological damage to Fox Glen. The Council sustain their objections raised in Reason for Refusal No 1 in relation to the appeal site.

#### The Environmental Issue

18. The appeal proposals are in accord with the Council's Nature Conservation Strategy in providing for the retention of a green "corridor" of public open space running across the site, linking Fox Glen to the open countryside. As well as providing public access to Fox Glen from the south-west, this "corridor" will also allow people to enter onto the appeal site, a facility unavailable at the present time. It is only the width of the corridor which remains to be resolved. There will therefore be a substantial planning gain inherent in the proposals. Furthermore the frontage to Hollin Busk Lane will be enhanced by a tree belt and a segregated footpath. Phasing of the development will ensure that any environmental impact is lessened.

19. The views now expressed by the Council in regard to the merging of Stocksbridge and Deepcar were not held in their submissions at the Green Belt Inquiry where the merging was considered to have already occurred (Doc 15 App 12). The Inspector at the Green Belt Inquiry also came to the view that the existing distinction between the communities was not clearly defined. There is therefore no substance in the Council's submission that the appeal proposals would lead to the coalescence of Stocksbridge and Deepcar. Furthermore, the Inspector for the District Plan Inquiry concluded that housing on the appeal site would be acceptable provided the central valley remained open (Doc 15 App 11).

20. The Council has itself accepted that the appeal site is appropriate for development both in the adopted District Plan and the emerging Unitary Development Plan. If they place such high value upon the environmental quality of the site, then it should not be allocated for housing.

21. Document 10 contains a detailed assessment of the environmental and ecological features of the site and the appellants' proposals for the central green "corridor". The appeal application presents an opportunity to provide a wide, green corridor linking Fox Glen to the Green Belt. A public right of way would be provided across this open area, and interesting species rich grassland and wetland meadows would be conserved, so that the public could enjoy their ecological interest.

22. The Clough Dike would be returned to its natural valley in open channel which would extend through to Fox Glen, and a footpath would follow the stream course with simple footbridges linking either side. Dry stone walls would be retained within the "corridor", preserving the habitat they provide, and the existing threat of grazing of the grasslands would be prevented by new management regimes.

23. Footpaths would run off the central corridor into the housing areas where possible taking advantage of existing drystone walls and trees. At the entrance to the open space from Hollin Busk Lane, a wildlife interpretation course could be provided which would be of particular value to the local schools. Access for the disabled would also be provided. Plan GRA/161/5 attached to Document 10, shows these proposals in detail.

24. The proposed green "corridor" would vary between 40 and 60 m in width and would encompass most of the higher value habitats identified in ecological appraisals and would follow the natural break of the slopes. As such it would preserve the green "corridor" or link advocated in the Council's Nature Conservation Strategy. The edges of the corridor would not be dwellings but their rear gardens, or existing woodland. The visual experience would be basically linear, looking either towards Fox Glen or the Green Belt. The Council's requirement that the "corridor" be wider is unnecessary and would not enhance its spatial quality.

25. The appellants are willing to enter into an agreement relating to the provision of the open area and its management and maintenance, and to accept a condition restricting development rights in the environmentally sensitive edges of the "corridor". They are content for the Secretary of State to rule on the desirable width of the open area.

#### Policy Issues

26. Apart from some limited interest for residential development in 1960 and 1978 the appeal site has been held in suspense from residential development for the past 13 years. For 10 years the site has been included in the adopted Stocksbridge Local Plan as "un-allocated" insofar as "land which is not included in the Green Belt it is anticipated will not be developed during the Plan Period, 1981 to 1991." There is therefore no presumption that the site will not be developed at the end of the Plan Period. It is the appellants' submission that the wording of Policy 3.2.8 would indicate a reasonable expectation that the appeal site would be developed for residential purposes post 1991.

27. This expectation is borne out by the fact that the appeal site is allocated for residential development in the draft Unitary Development Plan, a logical progression on the local plan provisions. However, the appropriate UDP Policy, Policy H12 is heavily qualified in a highly irregular manner to which the appellants have lodged an objection (Document 7).

28. From examination of documents and plans relating to the appeal site over the years, it would appear that the only reason for the land not being available for development has been the lack of a comprehensive drainage system for the area. Such a scheme has now been agreed between the Council and the appellants, removing the one obstacle to development.

29. Prior to the Committee Meeting of 14 November 1990, the Council had dealt with the appeal proposal in a straight forward manner, taking into account development plan issues, and the recommendations of Inspectors at both District Plan and Green Belt Plan Inquiry (Doc 15, Appendices 11 and 12). The Inspector appointed to the District Plan Inquiry concluded that peripheral residential development would be

acceptable at Hollin Busk and the Inspector to the Green Belt Inquiry found that the site did not fulfil a separating rôle.

30. These considerations culminated in the recommendation by the Director of Land and Planning that the appeal application be approved, subject to conditions. However the members refused the application on what the appellants' consider were political and inadequate planning grounds. It is significant that the Council does not include the Director's report in their inquiry documents. It can be found at Annex 7 to the Grounds of Appeal. Nor is any reference made to the report in the proof of evidence of the Council's witness at this inquiry.

31. It is therefore the appellants' submission that the Council has failed to take account of the statutory and emerging development plans and has failed to show sound and clear-cut reasons for rejection of the appeal proposal. The Council's approach is therefore at odds with the requirements of Circular 22/80.

32. The Council is also ignoring the requirements of PPG3 (and Circular 15/84). Government advice requires that an adequate and continuous supply of land should be genuinely available, and that where such land is not available the local planning authority should take steps to bring land forward. The Council have not taken such steps, for example employing compulsory purchasing powers. They rely solely on plan allocations. Of these allocations, the site at Townend Lane is far more intrusive in the landscape than the appeal site. PPG3 also makes it clear that the existence of more than a 5 year supply of housing land does not justify rejection of additional housing development.

33. The appeal site is available. A mixture of housing types would be provided, including dwellings suitable for the first time buyer. The appellants' agree to undertake drainage works to overcome what has been an obstacle to the site's development. Although no highway objection has been made to the appeal proposal, the appellants are aware of the concerns expressed by local residents and are willing to enter into an agreement relating to the necessary improvements to the highways, including the provision of traffic lights at the Carr Road/Manchester Road junction, another significant planning gain.

34. The Council has shown no demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance. The proposal is in conformity with adopted and emerging plans and there is no justification for an indefinite development embargo with no time limit. The Secretary of State is therefore urged to allow this appeal. The appellants' agree to the conditions suggested by the Council, plus the additional condition referred to at paragraph 25 of this report. The terms of agreement which are also suggested by the Council are broadly acceptable and could be resolved in discussion.

#### THE CASE FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY

The material points are

##### The Environmental Issues

35. The appeal site has several important functions. It forms the main physical break between the 2 communities of Stocksbridge and Deepcar. The appeal development would result in the coalescence of these 2 communities. It also provides a green "wedge", penetrating into the built-up area, allowing relief from the urban character and the opportunity for residents to have ready and easy access to a rural environment. While there are no public access rights to the site, the perimeter roads permit enjoyment of the site and views across it for local residents. The value of this site as an environmental amenity is clearly demonstrated by the significant local opposition to the appeal proposals.

36. The conclusion of the Inspector on the separating role of the site reached after the Inquiry into the Green Belt Plan is recalled. However the Council's view today is that the appeal site does separate the 2 communities and provides a valued green "lung" in the urban area. In those respects it is unique.

37. The appeal site also has ecological value. Concerns relating to the possible damage to the ecology of Fox Glen have been allayed by the agreements reached on drainage proposals. However, the report of the City Ecologist (Doc 15, App 3) highlights that there are parts of the appeal site itself which contain unimproved grassland, hedgerows and wet areas of ecological importance which should be preserved. The proposed development would significantly reduce the ecological content of the site. Much of the unimproved grassland would be developed.

38. The importance of the site is recognised in the Council's Nature Conservation Strategy (Doc 15, App 4). This document has been adopted as a basis of development control for the Council and as a guide to the evolving policies of the Sheffield Draft Unitary Development Plan.

39. In the Strategy, the appeal site forms part of a green corridor and link, connecting open land to the north of the appeal site, and Fox Glen to the east, with the open countryside to the south which lies in the Green Belt. Policy NCS 13 requires that the network of green corridor and links will be protected from development which would detract from their predominantly green and open character. The Draft Unitary Development Plan (Doc 15 App 5) supports the protection of green corridor and links as well as woodlands, SSIs and Nature Reserves at Policies GE6, GE7, GE8, GE10 and GE11.

40. Since the submission of the application, negotiations have continued to attempt to increase the areas of proposed open space and landscaping, culminating in the appellants' proposals shown on Plan Ai (Dwg No GRA/161/1A). Despite some increase in open space provision, it is considered that the proposed linear open space across the site does not represent the most effective green corridor linking Fox Glen with the rural areas to the south, either in terms of nature conservation and public amenity.

41. The proposed open space does not correspond to the natural valley form and does not take in important areas of unimproved grassland. The proposed development on the valley sides would appear oppressive and intrusive when viewed from the valley floor, giving it the distinct appearance of a cramped urban open space rather than the substantial green corridor envisaged in the Nature Conservation Strategy. Plan GRA/161/12, (Doc 10a) shows the central crest on the site edged in orange. The appeal development should respect this topography. Doc 10b, Plan GRA/161/11 shows the appellants' proposal. The Council considers that at the least, the central spine open area should include the area edged red on that plan.

42. Agreement cannot be reached between the appellants and the Council on this matter and the Secretary of State is therefore requested, if he is minded to allow this appeal, to indicate the required definition of the central open area.

#### Policy Issues

43. This open area of land is unique and deserving of special treatment. It should be preserved in its present form as long as possible. Such an approach is in accord with the requirements of Circular 15/84 which places emphasis on the development of derelict and underused land and the regeneration of urban areas. If such sites as the appeal site are released, in the absence of any overriding need, then the urban areas will be left to degenerate further.

44. In the adopted Stocksbridge District Plan, the appeal site is referred to in Policy 3.2.8 which states:

"LAND WHICH IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE GREEN BELT IT IS ANTICIPATED WILL NOT BE DEVELOPED DURING THIS PLAN PERIOD.

This policy applies to land at Hollin Busk which has been excluded from the Green Belt to allow for flexibility of housing provision beyond the plan period. Until then the land is expected to remain in its present use."

The District Plan period is 1981 to 1991. The Plan does not carry a presumption that the site will be developed after the Plan period.

45. Of the sites allocated for housing in the District plan, those on Coppice Close, and Townend have not been developed. Neither of these sites have any development restraints and no factors which preclude their development in an economic and viable manner. Thus there is a considerable reserve of allocated housing land available. Within the City there is a 15 year housing land supply. A grant of planning permission on the appeal site would lead to a gross overprovision of housing land.

46. Against this background of land supply, the Draft Sheffield Unitary Development Plan proposes, at Policy H12, (Doc 15 App 5) that the appeal site would only be released for housing when no other allocated land is available elsewhere in Stocksbridge or in the Middlewood/Oughtibridge/Wharncliffe side area of north-west Sheffield. A schedule of these sites is at Doc 15, App 14. The Unitary Development Plan is at a very early stage in its preparation, not yet being placed on formal deposit. However, the appellants have objected to Policy H12 and their objection and the Council's response is at Doc 7.

47. The appeal site is greatly valued as an open space amenity by local people and is unique in its particular environmental and ecological characteristics. It is considered that other potential residential sites in this part of Sheffield are less ecologically and environmentally sensitive. These other sites are generally further within the urban form and do not possess the same role as a green corridor or link with open countryside, nor do they separate 2 distinct communities in the same way as the appeal site. For these reasons H12 is the only site subject to the criteria set out in paragraph 46.

48. It is therefore the Council's submission that the appeal proposal is contrary to the Statutory Local Plan and the emerging Unitary Development Plan and would do demonstrable harm to the ecological and environmental quality of the area. The Secretary of State is urged to dismiss this appeal.

49. Document 4 contains suggested conditions and Terms of Agreements which the Council consider are essential if the Secretary of State is minded to allow this appeal. No steps have been taken to finalise agreements at this stage.

#### THE CASE FOR INTERESTED PERSONS

The material points are:

##### Mr W Micklethwaite

50. As a fourth generation of his family living in Stocksbridge, Mr Micklethwaite considers that he can feel the "pulse" of the area. He considers that he speaks for most of the residents in opposing the proposed development.



51. This is the only relatively flat area of land in the vicinity, with a rural aspect. People can walk along Hollin Busk Lane and enjoy and appreciate the open air and views, as a contrast to the built-up areas. Open countryside should not be developed when there is so much derelict land which requires regeneration. Such development benefits the community.
52. Stocksbridge is entirely dependent upon the steel industry. At the end of the last war there were some 6,000 employed at the steel works, now there are 2,000. If the steel works were to close, there would be a terrible problem of unemployment. There would be no jobs available for the people who would live in the appeal houses. They would be forced to commute for work, as many do already.
53. There are already acute traffic problems in the area. The junction of Carr Road and Manchester Road already is characterised by long delays and congestion. The appeal proposals would exacerbate those problems.
54. The proposals include a wedge of public open space, but developments do not always fulfil their initial promise in providing benefits.
55. He has no political affiliations. He attended a public meeting to discuss the proposals where 18 councillors all objected to the scheme. If local democracy means anything, that should have been the end of this matter.

Councillor Mrs E Dickinson

56. The Town Council of Stocksbridge supports the overwhelming objection to this proposal. The appeal site is the last area of natural open, green space left, acting as a "buffer" between the built-up areas.
57. The public do not have to have access to the site to appreciate its amenity. People can walk along Hollin Busk Lane and look across the site and the Don Valley beyond.
58. School children use the site for environmental studies. They can see countryside, town, industry and woodland all in one area.
59. This site should be retained for the benefit of today's children and for future generations. The appellants say that development brings wealth. The people who would live in the proposed houses would work away from the area and would shop where they worked. There would be no benefit to local traders.
60. The appellants offer public access to the site as a benefit. This access would be through a housing estate and there are plenty of housing estates now to walk through. Similarly, the view from Hollin Busk Lane would be of development; the strip of planting along the road side would not change this fact.
61. An Interpretation Centre is offered on the site which it is claimed would benefit the children. The children benefit now from the open landscape quality of the appeal site.
62. As regards the resolution of drainage problems in the area, it is not necessary to have this development to resolve those problems. From long acquaintance with the area Councillor Dickinson considers there is only one problem and that is at the culvert under Wood Royd Road when flash floods occur. This is not a major problem and could be easily resolved without recourse to development.
63. The provision of traffic lights at the Carr Road/Manchester Road junction would clearly be an improvement, as would new footways, but those would not compensate for the increased traffic on Carr Road, especially bearing in mind that 2 schools are

located on Carr Road. There is also a possibility that residents of the new development would use the country lanes through Bolderstone to avoid congestion in this built-up area.

64. The local people prize this open area for all the benefits it offers. The Secretary of State is urged to dismiss this appeal and to save this site for future residents of Stocksbridge and Deepcar.

Mr I C Houlton

65. Mr Houlton has lived in Deepcar for 20 years. He is the retired Head Teacher of Stocksbridge Comprehensive School and considers that he knows the local people well.

66. There have been several public meetings on this proposal and overwhelming objection to it. Many of the people who are against the proposal have no vested interest or any political involvement.

67. The appeal site has great natural beauty and lies on the fringes of the Peak District National Park. There are wonderful open views across the site, accessible for people working along Hollin Busk Lane. Because of this relatively level terrain, those views are accessible to the disabled and the old. Children use the site and its surroundings for environmental studies.

68. Traffic is already a problem in the area. Whilst traffic lights at the Carr Road/Manchester Road junction would improve conditions, there is still the problem of residents of the appeal development using the country lanes, which would be dangerous and damaging to the environment.

69. The proposed strip of open land through the appeal site would be about 40 m wide with houses on either side. This would result in a "funnelled" view in place of the present open vistas across the site. The existing sense of space would be completely lost.

70. The appellants offer to facilitate the improving of Fox Glen. The Steel Valley Project already has this in hand and it will be achieved without having to lose the appeal site to development.

71. There is no need for this proposed development. There is a gradual out-migration from the area, the decline in the steel industry leading to people moving to seek employment. As a result there are many houses for sale in the area. This whole issue is a conflict between developers who see a desirable site for houses and the existing residents who are fighting to retain this valued open space.

Miss J Banks

72. Miss Banks represents the Stocksbridge and Deepcar Environmental Action Group. This is a small organisation with a membership of about 100 and a committee of 10. The Committee objects to the appeal proposal and in so doing is representative of the membership. The Group has no political bias. Nobody on the Committee lives close to the site. There is therefore no self-interest involved, purely a wish to protect a very real amenity for the District.

73. Put simply, the Action Group does not want houses at Hollin Busk. No doubt the development would be well designed, with landscaping and a visitors' centre but the residents prefer the open space. There are magnificent views of the site and across the site to the crags beyond. This spaciousness and these vistas enhance the quality of life and the well-being of people.

74. The site is accessible. It lies within the built-up area. People commute along Hollin Busk Lane and at weekends or in the evenings they can walk along the lane and appreciate the countryside. Disabled people can also enjoy these pleasures.

75. The appellants' landscaping proposals are very impressive but people would prefer the spaciousness and wide views that exist.

76. The question must be asked as to who needs more houses in a recession. There are 2 issues to be considered, the needs of the local community and the desires of the local community. The local community does not need or want houses, and these wishes should be respected. Only in the case of exceptional need should the community's interests be overridden.

Mr J Flanagan

77. The City Wildlife Group is concerned at the impact of the proposals on the ecology of the area and whether the development is compatible with the policies of the Nature Conservation Strategy for Sheffield. Although some of the fields have been heavily grazed and improved, the appeal site also contains extensive areas of unimproved grassland. In one area, the City Ecologist found some 40+ species. The Council's Nature Conservation Strategy (Doc 16 App 4) states that such grassland habitats are of conservation priority and should be regarded as Sites of Scientific Interest.

78. In the Nature Conservation Strategy, the appeal site is designated as part of a Green Corridor and Link. Policy NCS13(A) of the Strategy states that such corridors and links will be protected from development which would harm their green and open character. The appeal proposal would result in a massive intrusion into the "corridor". It is accepted that the area of open space proposed by the appellants would provide a "link" between Fox Glen and the countryside to the south, but links are more tenuous than corridors. Corridors provide wider expanses of open land and accommodate more varied and shy species. Hollin Busk has an established habitat and species range. If ponds and trees are introduced the balance could be radically altered.

79. The Wildlife Group is also concerned that the proposed development could pose an unwelcome strain on the water resources of the region. A recent report on the state of Sheffield region's reservoirs shows that considerable investment is needed to make them meet Government safety standards. To enable repairs to be made, the capacity of most reservoirs will have to be reduced. If the Langsett Feeder Reservoir is so reduced, then the impact of the appeal development would require detailed consideration.

Mr W Milton

80. Mr Milton supports the proposed development. There is no lack of open space in this area. For 40 miles to the west and south of the site is uninterrupted countryside.

81. Fox Glen is neglected and unkempt. There is little wildlife either in the Glen or on the appeal site. Rather, Fox Glen is a haven for glue-sniffers, rapists and dogs.

82. Mr Milton has observed few walkers in the area and in winter Hollin Busk Lane is too exposed for walking. Nor can he accept that Carr Lane is congested as objectors also state that cars speed on that road.

83. Many of the objectors live in properties overlooking the appeal site and are purely protecting their interests.

#### CONCLUSIONS

(Figures in parenthesis refer to the paragraphs in this report in which relevant facts are contained).

84. In regard to the officer's recommendation of approval of the appeal application and the members' rejection of the application, I consider that it is quite proper for members to take a different view from officers, provided that view is based on sound planning grounds (16). I find that such grounds exist.

85. The statutory plan relating to this appeal is the adopted Stocksbridge District Plan, and the particular policy, Policy 3.2.8 (26, 44). The draft Unitary Development Plan is at a very early stage in its progress towards adoption and I therefore consider that Policy H12 of that Plan is a material consideration but carries lesser weight than if the Plan had reached a more advanced stage (27, 46). Policy 3.2.8 of the District Plan anticipate that the appeal site would not be released for housing development during the plan period, 1981 to 1991 (26, 44).

86. While I would agree that the wording of Policy 3.2.8 could be read to infer that housing development at Hollin Busk would be acceptable past 1991, equally I can accept the Council's submission that a negative assumption could be made.

87. Policy H12 of the draft UDP proposes that the appeal site be released for development only when all other allocated land has been utilised (27, 46). Whatever the merits of this approach, Policy H12 has yet to be tested in the processes of formal deposit and public local inquiry and therefore I do not consider that its contents should be decisive in this appeal.

88. In the context of the statutory plan for the area, I find no justification for release of the site for housing development at this time. Furthermore, while the presence of a 15 year supply of housing land (45) does not justify rejection of further development, it does in my opinion, indicate that there is no clearly identifiable need for additional residential development at this time.

89. I am also satisfied that sufficient housing land has been allocated in the District Plan to meet housing needs. The suggestion that the Council should employ compulsory purchase powers to facilitate the availability of such land is not, in my view, a realistic or practical proposition.

90. I therefore conclude that there is no overriding support for the proposal in terms of the statutory planning policies for the area.

91. In considering the environmental issues relating to this appeal I have been mindful of the conclusion of the Inspectors reporting on the District Plan and Green Belt Inquiries (19, 36). However I find myself unable to share their views.

92. In my opinion, the appeal site is a most attractive area of open land which still, despite its proximity to the urban areas, exhibits a predominantly rural character and appearance. The small fields bounded by dry stone walls and the gentler undulations of the land create, in my view, a typical hill-farming landscape (7).

93. I consider the appeal site performs several important functions. Firstly I am convinced, despite the findings of a previous Inspector, that this open area of land does effectively separate the communities of Stocksbridge and Deepcar in this

particular area. If the proposal were to proceed I am of the view that the southern parts of these communities would merge and would lose their present distinct identities.

94. Secondly I find that the site performs an important role in linking the open, Green Belt land to the south with the Fox Glen to the east and the open land to the north of Broomfield Lane (5). In so doing, an open "wedge" is created leading into the heart of the built-up area. This wedge acts both as a "lung" for the local residents and an ecological corridor. This latter role is recognised in the Nature Conservation Strategy (24, 38, 41). The proposed public open space across the centre of the site would retain a link between Fox Glen and the Green Belt, but not with the land to the north.

95. The third and very important role of the appeal site is the contribution it makes to the character and landscape quality of the area. I find that from Hollin Busk Lane there are extensive views across the open fields of the appeal site to the Don Valley and the hills beyond (8). Therefore, walking or driving along the Lane, the landscape and character of the surroundings is predominantly rural and of high visual quality. The prominence of the appeal site in the landscape, and its role as a forefront to the valley and hills beyond is even more pronounced when viewed from higher land to the south (8).

96. The appeal proposal would, in my opinion, result in the loss of these extensive views and the open, rural character of the area. The proposal to retain an open landscaped "strip" along the southern edge of Hollin Busk Lane would screen the development from view but would also obscure the long-range views. The visual link between the Green Belt to the south, across the appeal site to the valley and hills beyond would be lost.

97. From Broomfield Lane the view to the south is of the rising open fields of the appeal site with the hills of the Green belt beyond. Here again the spatial quality would be replaced by development and the linkage between the urban open space to the north and the Green Belt to the south would be broken (9).

98. The appellants' proposal of an open space across the site, following the natural valley (21) would not, in my opinion, overcome the loss of landscape and environmental quality to which I have referred. I would accept that public access to the appeal site would be an asset to the community, and I find the design of the open space to be very well considered. However, the present expansive views and rural character of the appeal site would, in my view, be replaced by a confined linear open area, attractive from within, but making little contribution to the character and landscape of the area as a whole. Even if the open space were to be increased in area as suggested by the Council, but not agreed by the appellants, I am not satisfied that these objections would be overcome (24, 25, 41).

99. I therefore conclude that the appeal proposal would be severely detrimental to the character of the area and to the quality of the environment of local residents. In coming to this conclusion, I have been mindful of the comprehensive drainage and highway improvements proposed by the appellants. However, in terms of drainage I am not convinced that the localised flash-flooding problem in Fox Glen could not be resolved without recourse to development of the appeal site (62). The provision of traffic lights at the Carr Road/Manchester Road junction would obviously be a benefit to road users, but would not in my opinion, offset the demonstrable harm that would result to the environmental and landscape quality of the area. I am not convinced that these planning objections would be overcome by the conditions and agreements proposed by the Council and the appellants.

RECOMMENDATION

100. I recommend that this appeal be dismissed.

I am Sir

Your obedient Servant

MARY A McCLUNE

Inspector

APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANTS

Mr G Roland Adamson DipTP(Lond) DipArch - 6 Brinkburn Drive, Totley Rise,  
Cert LD(UCL) Sheffield S17 3LU.

He called:

Mr G Bostock FRICS - Fowler Sandford.

Mr M F Browell BA MA ALI MI Hort - Landscape Architect.

FOR THE PLANNING AUTHORITY

Mr M D Foster - Principal Solicitor to the  
Sheffield City Council.

He called:

Mr R Bryan BA MRTPI - Chief Assistant Planning  
Officer.

INTERESTED PERSONS

Mr W Micklethwaite - 1 Broomfield Lane,  
Stocksbridge, Sheffield.

Cllr Mrs E Dickinson, Mayor of - 29 Wood Royd Road, Deepcar,  
Stocksbridge Sheffield.

Mr I C Houlton - 1 Royd Lane, Deepcar,  
Sheffield.

Miss J Banks, on behalf of the - 34 Whitwell Lane, Stocksbridge,  
Stocksbridge and Deepcar Environmental Sheffield.  
Action Group

Mr J Flanagan, on behalf of the - Bessemer House, Carlisle Street  
Sheffield City Wildlife Group East, Sheffield.

Mr W Milton - Royd Farm, Carr Road, Deepcar,  
Sheffield.

DOCUMENTS

Document 1 - List of persons present at the inquiry.

" 2 - Notification of the Inquiry and persons notified.

DOCUMENTS CONTINUED

- Document 3 - Responses.
- " 4 - Suggested Conditions and Terms of Agreements.
- " 5 - Tree Preservation Order No 1, N20.
- " 6 - Letters expressing interest in developing the appeal site.
- " 7 - Objection to Provisions of Unitary Development Plan and Council's response.
- " 8 - Letter from MRM Partnership to G Roland Adamson, dated 3 July 1991.
- " 9 - Proof of Evidence and attachments of Mr G Bostock FRICS.
- " 10 - Proof of Evidence and attachments of Mr M F Browell, BA MA ALI MI Hort.
- " 10a - Plans GRA/161/11 and GRA/161/12.
- " 11 - "Other-than-Planning Issues" (GRA/161/8).
- " 12 - Bundle of photographs of the appeal site and Fox Glen.
- " 13 - Letter from the Stocksbridge Steel Valley Project to Stocksbridge.
- " 14 - Submission by Sheffield City Wildlife Group.
- " 15 - Proof of Evidence and attachments of Mr R Bryan BA MRTPI.

PLANS

- Plan A - The application plan.
- " Ai - Amended application plan, GRA/161/1A.
- " B - Drainage proposals, Mander, Raikes and Marshall.