



[News \(http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/\)](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/)
[Sport \(http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/sport/\)](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/sport/)
[Business \(http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/business/\)](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/business/)
[Property \(http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/property/\)](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/property/)
[Jobs \(http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/jobs/\)](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/jobs/)
[Motors \(http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/motors/\)](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/motors/)
[Announcements \(http://announce.jpno.ypos/\)](http://announce.jpno.ypos/)
[Directory \(http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/findit/\)](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/findit/)
[Shop \(http://www.dealmonster.co.uk/shop/\)](http://www.dealmonster.co.uk/shop/)
[Deals \(http://www.dealmonster.co.uk/deal/leeds/\)](http://www.dealmonster.co.uk/deal/leeds/)
[More](#)

THE YORKSHIRE POST [\(http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/\)](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/)

[General news \(http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/main-topics/general-news/\)](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/main-topics/general-news/)
[Politics \(http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/main-topics/politics/\)](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/main-topics/politics/)
[Education \(http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/main-topics/education/\)](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/main-topics/education/)
[Local stories \(http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/main-topics/local-stories/\)](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/main-topics/local-stories/)
[National \(http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/main-topics/national/\)](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/main-topics/national/)
[Showbiz \(http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/main-topics/showbiz/\)](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/main-topics/showbiz/)
[Northern Digest \(http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/main-topics/northern-digest/\)](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/main-topics/northern-digest/)
[World \(http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/main-topics/world/\)](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/main-topics/world/)

AN INDEPENDENT inquiry has been ordered into a bid for ancient woodland to be granted Government protection from destruction at the hands of developers.

Councillors in Sheffield were yesterday accused of “passing the book” after it failed to press ahead with a hearing for an application for ancient woodland in the north of the city to be registered a village green, which has the potential to block a planning application to build a motorway service station, hotel and food court on the land.

It came after legal experts representing landowners St Paul's Developments argued the matter was of ‘serious dispute’ and required advanced notice of evidence being submitted by the applicant Cowley residents’ group, which is required to prove the land at Smithy Wood has been used for recreational purposes for over 20 years.

The licensing committee opted to foot the bill for a non-statutory inquiry into the application and make a decision based on its outcome rather than hear from the witnesses which had gathered in the town hall for the start of the two-day hearing.

A separate planning committee decision on Extra MSA Group's £40 million plan for the 12th-century site at junction 35 of the M1 is now likely to come before the inquiry, thwarting campaigners’ efforts to stop it. It's an obvious example of corporate money overruling the efforts of local people and the councillors have failed to stick up for themselves against this bullying,” said Paul Brackenby, deputy chairman of the Cowley residents’ group.

“We have evidence from people, some who've lived there nearby for 50 years, speaking about everything from building dens in the woods as children or taking the dogs walks there. All we wanted was the chance to present this to the council committee today, but they have passed the book for an independent inquiry instead.” Martin Carter, a barrister for St Paul's Developments, said: “We have had no opportunity to consider what we are likely to hear from the evidence, if village green status is granted it poses serious restrictions on the land both for the owners and the public.”

The matter has now been handed to the Commons Registration Authority. While no date has been set for a decision on the motorway service station, the campaign is now re-focusing its attention to the fight.

So far, there have been 8,000 objections to the proposals, including national charity the Woodland Trust, which has held it up as an example of ‘biodiversity offsetting’, a planning loophole which allows developers to build on centuries-old land if compensatory woodland will be created or restored somewhere else. Extra MSA Group has promised to compensate for the loss of part of Smithy Wood by creating a 39-acre woodland with 60,000 new trees.

The trust believes approval could set a national precedent and pave the way for further destruction of historic habitats.

Oliver Newham, a lead campaigner at the Woodland Trust, said: “We're supporting the residents’ group but this is a big case for us. If this gets approved, you wonder where things will stop.

“There are so many infrastructure proposals, such as HS2, which threaten to destroy our ancient woods or fail to take the impact on environments into account.”



Find the right motor for you.
Search over 160,000 used cars nationwide.



Save Money with your local paper
Secrets, advice, deals...



Find the right property for you.
Buying or renting? Your search starts here.

Motors



Save Money



Property

