



THE BATTLE FOR SANDFORD FARM: PUBLIC INQUIRY DECISION AWAITED

The public inquiry into the appeal by Woodley Developments Ltd to build almost 500 homes and a retirement village on 300,000 cubic metres of remediated landfill at Sandford Farm is over. The Inspector will submit his recommendation to the Secretary of State by the beginning of September with a final decision due some weeks after that.

The inquiry lasted for six very intense days in June. LVAG was able to present residents' concerns to the Inspector in a very professional way with the help of our expert witnesses—David Parker, Phil Challis and David Norbury—and barrister Lisa Busch.

Partial report

They drew attention to the partial report obtained from the Environment Agency, which stated that the developers had potentially underestimated the volume of landfill on the site by a staggering 333%! The full report has now confirmed our suspicions, so this would mean 13 years of land reclamation based on the developer's work-rate.

We are sure that LVAG's evidence also stiffened Wokingham BC's resolve. The Council's barrister presented a very strong case that fundamentally challenged the original planning officer's report recommending approval.

Important

Residents and other parties were able to make their presentations to the Inspector. It was very important that their very real and local concerns were heard regarding the potential impact on health, traffic, increased flood risk, waste removal, the area's bio-



Members of the LVAG inquiry team — barrister Lisa Busch, expert witnesses Phil Challis and David Norbury and solicitor Clive Williams (right) — on a site visit

-diversity, local schools and public amenities.

All speakers' arguments were put forward in a factual, unemotional way which countered the developer's view of local residents as 'irrational' people who live in 'uninspiring' houses.

Thank you

We would like to thank **all residents** who spoke, **Rob Wilson MP** who spoke on behalf of his constituents and also read out a letter of support from **Theresa May MP**, and representatives

from **Woodley, Charvil and Hurst** councils.

Thanks, too, to **all of you** who contributed in so many ways — printing, distributing and reading our newsletters, organising and attending fundraising events, sending letters of objection to the Council, and generally giving up your precious time to help out in whatever way you could.

And last, but by no means least, to **David Parker** and **Phil Challis** for their huge effort in researching and presenting their evidence at no cost to residents.

Read our barrister's closing submission and check the latest campaign news at

www.lvag.org.uk

MORE FUNDS NEEDED

LVAG exceeded its fundraising target of £10,000 thanks to generous donations from nearly 300 residents, local councils and village societies. However, the extended inquiry involved extra costs and we have a fund shortfall of approximately £2,500.

If you are able to make a contribution please drop off your donation to LVAG c/o either 8 Comet Way, Woodley, RG5 4NZ or 5 Mohawk Way, RG5 4UE, or pay via PayPal on the LVAG website.

INQUIRY COSTS BREAKDOWN

Legal support (barrister and solicitor):

£10,500 (incl. VAT)

Expert witnesses (remediation and planning):

£3,100 (incl. VAT)

Administration (photocopying/couriers etc):

£900.00

Shortfall: £2,500

We intend to organise a social event to boost fundraising.

Join us on a **sponsored circular walk**, taking in part of Dinton Pastures and the banks of the River Loddon adjacent to the Sandford Farm site on **Sunday, 20 September**.

Watch out for further details in the next newsletter or on the LVAG website - www.lvag.org.uk

Corby birth defects due to toxic waste – council owes a duty of care

The case of families who claimed their children were born with defects caused by exposure to toxic substances during waste clean-up operations in Corby, Northamptonshire has clear implications for Sandford Farm.

Two LVAG committee members went along to hear the judgement in the High Court in London on the 29th July. The judge ruled that the local council had been 'extensively negligent' and was 'liable in public nuisance, negligence and breach of statutory duty'.

The judgement cited the affected areas in Corby as extending up to four kilometres from the works. Applied locally, this would mean that all of **Woodley, Sonning, Charvil, Hurst, Twyford, Winnersh** and most of **Earley** would be vulnerable to airborne contamination from any reclamation process at Sandford Farm.

There is now a clear legal principle that local

authorities hold a duty of care to protect communities from the effects of disturbing contaminated land. The Corby judgement says:

"What happened was that it [Corby Borough Council] bit off more than it could chew and did not really appreciate the enormity, ramifications and difficulty of what it was setting out to achieve in terms of removing and depositing very substantial quantities of contaminated material."

LVAG will highlight to Wokingham Borough Council and other bodies the dangers inherent in extracting the safely buried landfill at Sandford Farm in such close proximity to local homes.

"We will press for the site to be removed from the list of those suitable for housing and suggest, instead, that it's restored to countryside status as originally planned," confirmed LVAG Chairman David Parker.

SPONSORED CIRCULAR WALK

To meet legal costs arising from the public inquiry

Sunday 20 September

Around Dinton Pastures and along the banks of the Loddon