



SANDFORD FARM—SAFE OR NOT?

Developers' claims that the old Sandford Farm landfill should be removed as it is a 'potential death trap' and 'a danger to local people' (*Woodley Chronicle*, 28 August) have been refuted by Loddon Valley Action.

"The threat to the community is in the proposed extraction of the old landfill, not in leaving it alone," said LVAG's Phil Challis. "To justify 450 houses as a means of funding the removal of the waste for the benefit of the community is nonsense. It is clearly motivated by commercial gain.

"When the landfill was operational, few houses bordered the site. Now the Airfield development's within 10 metres of it. Exposing these homes to the consequences of unearthing in just eight months what took more than 20 years to bury is where the real danger lies."

In 1999, a Government planning inspector turned down a similar Hicks Persimmon application to build 250 homes at Sandford Farm on appeal, saying the site had been successfully restored and no justification had been offered to restore it again.

POSTER AND PETITION TO BACK PROTESTS

A small poster—delivered with this newsletter—and a forthcoming petition will add to protests voiced in some 450 letters received by Wokingham Council against Hicks Persimmons' Sandford Farm proposals.

If you can, please support for the campaign by displaying the poster wherever its message can be seen by passing pedestrians. And watch out for the petition LVAG representatives will be asking you to sign early in October. We're aiming to match the volume of protest letters with a record number of signatures against the proposals.

The unprecedented letter response so far reflects the huge resentment of local people towards the insensitivity of plans that ride rough shod over legitimate health, environmental and lifestyle concerns.

There's still time to have your say about Hicks Persimmon's proposals. Write to: Environmental Services Department, Planning Services, PO Box 157, Wokingham District Council, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1WR quoting references 2003/9638 and 2003/9639.

Since Last Time...

Loddon Valley Action and the Hurst Village Society have been busy working in their respective communities, and with each other, to mobilise opposition to the Sandford Farm proposals.

- Both MPs for the area—Reading East's Jane Griffiths and Maidenhead's Theresa May, have made site visits and received deputations from local residents.

- A detailed briefing has been prepared and sent to local councillors covering every aspect of the planning applications. This is designed to help councillors question council officers—who will consider the applications—on some 15 issues that reflect the very real concerns of the local community.

- LVAG is maintaining a regular flow of press releases to the local media to voice the community's objections.

- And there has been a steady stream of contributions to the letters pages of the local papers by residents.

You can help up keep the momentum.

Write in yourself—to express your objections, or contest a comment from the developers as they seek to justify their proposals. Full address details are overleaf.

THREAT TO RARE BIRDS

Fears for the future of rare birds known to frequent Lavell's Lake in Woodley are being raised among local conservationists in the wake of the Sandford Farm development proposal.

Lavell's Lake, across the River Loddon from the development site, is nationally known for its wintering bitterns, as well as attracting barn owls and kingfishers to its undisturbed habitats.

Chairman of the Friends of Lavell's Lake, Fraser Cottington, is afraid that years of work could be jeopardised if the houses and the necessary removal of 300,000 cubic metres of unknown landfill waste go ahead. The waste will be transported across the Loddon via a new Bailey bridge close to Lavell's Lake and the winter home of the bitterns.

"Lorry-loads of noxious waste thundering just 70 metres behind our reserve, the potential damage from any waste spills and years of noisy construction work are likely to drive all the shy species like the bittern away, maybe for good," said Mr. Cottington.



The Bittern

"We've worked hard in developing the bittern's reed bed habitat at Lavell's and that's brought us visits nearly every winter since 1983," he went on. "But this effort will have been in vain if the area's tranquility is destroyed."

Mr. Cottington also expressed concern for the future of barn owls in the area. He said: "There have been breeding successes around Sandford Farm this year, thanks to existing rough ground habitats that provide an ideal hunting ground free from pesticides. This will be ruined by excavation and development."

"Furthermore, disturbance to wildlife will continue long after any construction is complete as more people move in, bringing more litter and making more noise. Too many dogs not kept on leads, and roaming through undergrowth, will disturb nesting birds. This stretch of valuable river and wetland habitat could be destroyed forever."

The number of bitterns is now thought to amount to only 42 males nationally, although this four times the level recorded six years ago.

Stay in touch with the campaign...

www.lvag.org.uk

WHOSE WINDFALL?

Sandford Farm developer John Hicks says Woodley will benefit from his proposals through cash for better local amenities. But who will profit most from this 'windfall'?

Certainly not the local community.

Anticipated profits from the development, should it go ahead, are conservatively estimated at tens of millions of pounds.

Extra funds for doctors' surgeries and schools are little more than loose change in comparison.

No wonder Mr. Hicks can afford to feel so generous.

Remember, this is money that will be made at the expense of local people. They will be exposed to hazardous waste removed within metres of their homes and suffer the long term impact of 450 new houses on an already overburdened infrastructure

The most significant windfall Woodley can expect is air borne toxic dust over its homes and gardens.

Write to the Editors at the papers listed below to voice your objections to the Sandford Farm proposals:

Woodley Chronicle
50-56 Portman Road
Reading
RG30 1BA
letters@readingchronicle.co.uk

Woodley Times
Unit 5, Anvil Court
Denmark Street
Wokingham
RG40 2BB
editorial@wokingham-times.co.uk

Reading Evening Post
8 Tessa Road
Reading
RG1 8NS
editorial@reading-epost.co.uk

LVAG contacts: **Phil Challis** 944 2164 **David Parker** 969 3982 **George Puttock** 969 9772