



NEWS from Loddon Valley Action

www.lvag.org.uk

SANDFORD FARM APPEAL DECISION 'STINKS'

Local residents react angrily

Loddon Valley Action (LVAG), the residents' protest group opposing development at Sandford Farm, has condemned the decision-making process leading up to today's (4 November) announcement allowing the development of 500 homes, a retirement village and a community centre.

Chairman David Parker said, "We are extremely disappointed with the decision and bitterly angry about the process by which the decision was made."

Although the final decision on the planning application has been deferred until March 2010, allowing the developers until 2 February to amend their plans in line with certain issues raised by the Inspector, the green light has effectively been given to development.

"We have to accept that the principal of development at Sandford Farm is now confirmed," David Parker went on. "We are only slightly comforted by the fact that the inspector applied 47 conditions to this outline planning application and that residents will have the opportunity to challenge the details in the full application when it is submitted."

He added: "The process by which the decision was made stinks.

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"I am convinced that if Wokingham Borough Council's (WBC) planning committee had been presented in January with the information that the Council presented to the Inspector in June then the Council's grounds for original refusal would have been much stronger and the developers would not have appealed.

"WBC's development control team is at fault. First, it recommended approval to the Council's planning committee without providing accurate information to that committee. Then, during the appeal, witnesses for WBC gave evidence that directly contradicted the information given to the planning committee.

"That just weakened their evidence to the Inspector."

Phil Challis, Wokingham Borough Councillor for Loddon and a witness at the inquiry on behalf of LVAG in relation to planning policy, says that the Sandford Farm decision undermines the entire planning process.

"This decision sends out the clear message that we are all wasting time, effort and, in WBC's case, money in determining a new Local Plan to control development up to 2026.

"The Inspector, with no democratic responsibility, has come along and overruled many instances where this application is contrary to the local policies contained in the Wokingham Local Plan.

"So what's the point of having a Local Plan?"

The developer has up to three years to submit final plans once it has suitably met the 2 February deadline.

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Note to editors:

LVAG has led Woodley residents' opposition to development at Sandford Farm for over 20 years. Residents raised £15,000 to meet the professional costs of a dedicated solicitor and barrister to put their case at the June inquiry.

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