



Stour Valley Action Group

www.stourvalleyactiongroup.org.uk



5th July 2013

Dear Member,

Further to our Newsletter of May 23rd which reported on our Meeting in Little Horkesley Village Hall on May 22nd, the Pre Inquiry Meeting (PIM) took place on June 27th in Colchester Town Hall. We attended this meeting on behalf of SVAG.

The Meeting was conducted by the appointed Inspector, Mr Colin Ball who set out the timetable for the Inquiry.

Mr Ball advised that he had made a preliminary visit to the site and the area.

Patrick Clarkson, QC, Counsel for the Appellant, listed the expert witnesses that would be called on behalf of Bunting and Sons. It would appear that they will call seven or eight such witnesses.

Simon Pickles, Counsel for Colchester Borough Council, identified the expert witnesses to be called by the Council. There will be four such witnesses.

Proofs of evidence by the expert witnesses have to be submitted by the beginning of September.

David Whipps of Holmes and Hill in Braintree stated that SVAG would be making a presentation at the Inquiry and might be calling further witnesses.

Charles Aldous said that he would be speaking on behalf of Colne Stour Countryside Association. Chas Bazeley also said that he would be speaking, as did Katherine Potts for the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project. The Inspector made it clear that other individuals and organizations would be invited to speak when the Inquiry starts.

The Inspector said that the three main considerations would be: the sustainability of the chosen site, the impact on the rural surroundings including the AONB and material Planning Policy reasons for refusal. He was also concerned about the impact on the Grade I listed Church of All Saints.

After considerable discussion, the Inspector directed that the Business Plan, which has hitherto been redacted, should be made available in the Public Domain within two weeks of the PIM.

The Inquiry will take place in Langham Community Centre except for the last two or three days which will take place in Colchester Town Hall. There will also be an extensive site visit.

A copy of the Inspector's notes of this meeting is on our web site and this shows that a day and a half has been allocated for third party objectors including SVAG.

At our meeting on May 22nd, the question of how SVAG should be represented at the Inquiry was discussed in full. Since that meeting I have received a substantial number of pledges of financial support. Following a meeting arranged by Robert Pomery, we also received an estimate from Mr David Whipps of Holmes and Hill in Braintree to provide Rule 6 advocacy. He is highly experienced in this field.

The SVAG Committee discussed our options at length at a Committee Meeting on June 9th. The Committee decision was that we had insufficient funding pledged for full Rule 6 participation and that we would be acting on our own and without the joint involvement of Dedham Vale Society, CPRE or the Colne Stour Countryside Association although some financial support has been offered.

The Inspector has indicated that we can get most of the benefits of Rule 6 without taking that formal step. The route that we therefore propose to take is to use the excellent services of Robert Pomery and David Whipps in preparing our case to be presented at the Inquiry and to assist and advise us at the Inquiry itself. Our case will be submitted in written form by the beginning of September. We are also actively considering appointing consultants to work with us to provide expert evidence on tourism aspects of Horkesley Park. There is a considerable price tag associated with the appointment of the various third parties and I will be writing to all those who have offered support to ask if they are prepared to fund this proposed way forward. We also need donations from those who have not so far pledged support. Short of full Rule 6 involvement, the Committee believes that this will give us the best possible chance of influencing the outcome of the Inspector's decision.

The Inquiry is due to start on October 1st and last for up to 12 working days. Please ensure that you put these dates in your diaries and are available to support us at the Inquiry. We will put out a further Newsletter about this in September.

Will Pavry
Chairman, Stour Valley Action Goup.