

# **SUTTON COURTENAY FORUM**

## **BACKGROUND**

Sutton Courtenay(SC) is unique in facing the cumulative impact of a wide range of industrial and housing developments on inadequate sewerage and highways infrastructure and hemmed in by a narrow bridge over the River Thames.

To highlight this Sutton Courtenay Action arranged a march of some 300 villagers on the Vale DC Offices to ask for a "Fair Deal for Sutton Courtenay" and that its unique situation would in future be fully considered in planning and wider decisions affecting the village. This was followed by the presentation of a petition at both the County and the Vale District Councils.

In a subsequent meeting the Leader of the Vale DC, Cllr Matthew Barber acknowledged:

- the unique situation that Sutton Courtenay faces
- the cumulative impact of development on the village
- the anger and upset it is causing the villagers
- the strong view of villagers and experts that the developments next to the landfill site, with the risks of contamination, flooding and odours and with poor access are irresponsible
- the concern amongst resident about the implications of the Didcot Garden Town and its proposed boundaries, Didcot and Milton Park Enterprise Zones.

He consequently suggested setting up a Sutton Courtenay Forum to address these and wider issues affecting the Village. With the approval of the Local Plan the Council will be able to be more flexible and oppose speculative development more effectively.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Forum is to enable a frank exchange of views between the Leader of the Vale DC and his officers, SC Parish Council, the SC Neighbourhood Plan Committee, SC Action, SC residents and other bodies as relevant such as OCC, Didcot Garden Town, MEPC and LEP; to ensure that Sutton Courtenay's unique situation is fully acknowledged and acted upon, in both forward planning and planning decisions, and that a "Fair Deal for Sutton Courtenay" is achieved. This will sit alongside the development and policy planning process and will not be a substitute for the statutory processes and other regulations that we must follow.

## **INITIAL OBJECTIVES**

1. To enable the Leader of the Council to provide detailed responses to the 6 initial issues raised in the *Fair Deal for Sutton Courtenay* petition submission (Annex A)
2. To facilitate greater transparency and increase SC's influence in the consideration of planning policies and developments affecting the village, including such initiatives as Didcot Garden Town and its Enterprise Zone.
3. To assist in the development of the SC Neighbourhood Plan and the role of the Parish Champion.
4. To provide SC access to relevant officers and bodies such as Didcot Garden Town, MEPC & LEP.

## **STATUS**

The Forum has been formed for the benefit of the local community. It is a means of achieving greater transparency through the sharing of information and exchange of views on planning and wider issues. In that it will also seek to minimise the adverse effects of policies/development on the local community and enable them to share in the benefits. It is a way of the village directly interfacing with the Vale in support of the Parish Council and the Parish Champion in their formal roles.

## **COMPOSITION**

The Forum will consist of the Leader of the Vale DC and any officers he feels it necessary to draw on, with representative of the Parish Council, the Neighbourhood Planning Group, Sutton Courtenay Action, the SC District and County Council councillors. The SC representatives may invite other villagers who it is felt would assist in the discussions.

## **MEETINGS**

The Forum should initially meet regularly until the current issues have been adequately addressed and then at least twice a year and should not last more than one and a half hours.

## **MEETING NOTES**

Notes of the main issues discussed and points for action will be produced by the Forum, subject to the draft being agreed with the Leader of the Council.

Annexes:

A: A Fair Deal for Sutton Courtenay

B: Additional Objectives (For Guidance)

## **A FAIR DEAL FOR SUTTON COURTENAY**

Sutton Courtenay is unique in facing the cumulative impact of a wide range of industrial and housing developments on a woefully inadequate sewerage and highways infrastructure and traffic gridlocked by the narrow bridge over the River Thames. To its east are gravel pits and aggregate plants, an extensive landfill site with a large Material Recovery Facility and a composting site which regularly emits noxious odours. To its south there is to be a giant warehouse, which with the considerable extension of Milton Park, albeit under the welcome Science Vale initiative, will put even greater pressure on the inadequate infrastructure.

In addition, at the last count there is - approved or in the pipeline - a grand total of 1168 new dwellings, doubling the size of the village despite the above pressures. Moreover, one of the proposed development is adjacent to uncapped and unlined landfill cells, with potentially toxic contents, methane gas in evidence, with high ground water levels in an area which floods regularly, severe odour problems and with dangerously inadequate access.

Faced with these cumulative impacts Sutton Courtenay requests that it is considered as special case in planning decisions, and that:

**1. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CUMULATIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENTS ARE CARRIED OUT ON ALL CURRENT AND FUTURE SC APPLICATIONS**

To ensure cumulative impact considerations are fully addressed by officers and the planning committee.

**2. THE VALE FULLY ADDRESSES INDEPENDENT EXPERT ADVICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Especially where such advice conflicts with that of statutory consultees and/or the advice given by developer appointed experts.

**3. THE REDROW/HOBBYHORSE LANE APPLICATION IS DEFERRED**

Until all issues raised by residents and their independent experts have been satisfactorily resolved, the EA and OCC have responded in full and that a review is completed of the risk assessment undertaken in deciding that this was to be a Strategic Site, despite the above risks.

**4. PRIORITY IS GIVEN TO SCIENCE VALE UK APPLICATIONS**

Over warehousing and applications involving large numbers of low wage jobs.

**5. MORE NEW HOMES BONUS IS DIRECTED TO SUTTON COURTENAY AND ITS INFRASTRUCTURE**

To compensate for all that has been and will be earned by VWHDC from SC applications

**6. THE SUTTON COURTENAY PC AND NDP ARE INVOLVED IN ALL STRATEGIC DISCUSSIONS AFFECTING THE PARISH.**

## **ADDITIONAL OBJECTIVES**

**These additional objectives are provided for guidance on which to develop discussions.**

1. To enable the Leader of the Council to provide detailed responses to the 6 initial issues raised in the *Fair Deal for Sutton Courtenay* petition submission (Annex A)
2. To facilitate greater transparency and increase SC's influence in the consideration of planning policies and developments affecting the village, including such initiatives as Didcot Green Town and its Enterprise Zone.
3. To guarantee that full consideration of the environmental and cumulative impacts on Sutton Courtenay is undertaken in deliberations on developments in the area and the village.
4. To provide SC access to relevant officers and bodies such as Didcot Garden Town, MEPC & LEP.
5. Ensure that the risks and potential liabilities of developing housing sites next to the FCC landfill site are fully acknowledged and that such development is actively discouraged[opposed].
6. Ensure that developers use accredited experts in their submissions and that the views of experts commissioned by villagers are properly considered by equivalent experts in the planning process.
7. To assist in the development of the SC Neighbourhood Plan and the role of the Parish Champion.
8. Maximise the accrual of development and the New Housing Benefit (NHB) funding for the village.
9. To make sure that improvements are made to the village infrastructure in a timely fashion, to fully meet the current deficiencies and that any required enhancements are fully in position prior to the occupation [commencement] of any future development.
10. To improve the monitoring of developments and planning permissions in the village, including the enforcement of planning conditions.
11. To identify actions/studies to facilitate greater understanding of the impacts on the village of additional activity such as increased traffic.
12. To recognise the cumulative impact of development on traffic within the village and to develop solutions to reduce through traffic.
13. To increase the use of environmental assessment on current and future planning applications.

14. That priority in the Science Vale and Didcot Enterprise areas is given to development which supports the achievement of the Vale's aim of developing a world class centre for technology and innovation, as opposed to warehouses and developments involving large numbers of low wage jobs, which would add burdens to the local infrastructure.