

THAMES FARM INQUIRY UPDATE – 18/12/2014

The Thames Farm public inquiry concluded on Thursday evening (18/12/2014) with closing submissions by Susanne Ornsby, the QC acting for SODC, and David Cooper, the lawyer acting for the appellant. Prior to that, excellent closing statements had been made by the respective chairmen of Shiplake and Harpsden parish councils, Tudor Taylor and Kester George, both of which tied in well with Miss Ornsby's submission.

Earlier the Planning Inspector, Ian Jenkins, accompanied by representatives of both parties to the appeal, had conducted a comprehensive visit of the site, its surroundings, and the two proposed pedestrian crossing points and footpaths to the village centre. It was clear from Mr Jenkins' meticulous approach to this inspection that he had taken careful note of all the points made by the parish council and residents regarding the site, its location and our particular concerns about the crossings on the A4155. He was not, of course, able to make any comment himself on these matters during his inspection.

We are pleased and satisfied with the conduct of our case and of the inquiry itself:

- Miss Ornsby was an excellent QC and presented the case for SODC against the appellant most ably;

- The Inspector, Mr Jenkins, conducted the inquiry with consideration and fairness to both sides during the proceedings and with impressive thoroughness; it was clear that he had not only read and "logged" the written and verbal submissions made by both parish councils but had also carefully read all 232 letters sent in by residents in response to the appeal, referencing some by name.

The appeal inquiry is now formally adjourned in order to resolve 2 outstanding legal issues between the respective parties, which do not involve the parish councils. In the unlikely event that these are not resolved beforehand*, appeal proceedings will recommence on Tuesday 3rd March 2015. The Inspector has indicated the likely date for his decision is 7 weeks from the close of the inquiry, which would indicate a date towards the end of April 2015.

(* In the event the issues are resolved before the 3/03/2015, the date of the Inspector's decision may be sooner than the end of April 2015).

In the meantime we have no indication of the likely outcome and must wait with bated breath. We should like to thank all concerned in supporting our case, particularly those residents who wrote in to the Inspectorate and attended the inquiry proceedings. All of this was both helpful to our cause and noted by the Inspector himself.

Thank you! "

Geoff Thomas – Chairman Planning Working Group, Shiplake Parish Council.