

SURREY HERALD

Sunbury & Shepperton

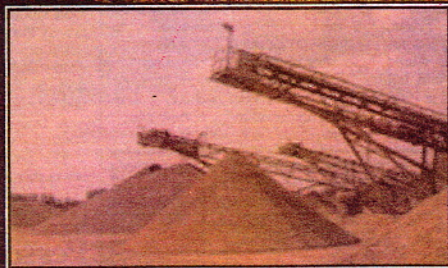


June 8, 2005

A SURREY HERALD AND NEWS PUBLICATION, est 1892

40p

What does this mean...?



Q: Do you have any comments on the specific programme of community involvement in preparation of minerals development plan documents?*

– Surrey County Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

BEAUTY SPOT: Vicarage Farm, above, could become nothing more than a gravel site, inset, if the plans go ahead after consultation

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SUNBURY and Shepperton residents are scratching their heads over how to extract the meaning of questions in a survey about gravel extraction.

Meaningless jargon in the Surrey County Council questionnaire has left the 2,000 recipients baffled.

They have objected to the proposed extracting of gravel and minerals at Vicarage Farm, Halliford Road, Shepperton, and Watersplash Farm, Fordbridge Road, Sunbury.

The aim of the survey is to ask objectors how they would like to be consulted and informed about the process, but members of Sunbury and Shepperton Against Gravel Extraction group

(SSAGE), have been inundated with calls and emails from confused and angry residents seeking advice on how to respond.

Co-founder Isabel Hutchings of Halliford Road said: "This consultation actually contradicts the principle of community involvement. It has been written in such obscure language and is so full of jargon that many are at a loss as to what questions they are even asking."

"We have written to the council on this matter. To win the trust of the community, they must communicate with them in a language which is readily understood, concise and jargon free."

She thinks Surrey is not really interested in the people's views and is just complying with planning law.

Among those scratching their heads is Margaret Lea of Sunbury who believes the aim is to discourage people

*SSAGE say: The first evidence of community involvement in this process is far from encouraging.

from responding.

She thinks many will be put off and simply throw it away. "This is a strange way for an organisation whose motto is supposedly 'Putting People First' to behave. Surely the council should have started this consultation when they first started work on the new minerals plan last year."

Mrs Hutchings said: "Information on Surrey's website admits to not having processed all the representations regarding the proposed sites, yet posts a report which fails to mention any correspondence regarding Vicarage Farm."

A Surrey Council spokesman said: "The Council has done its best to simplify original technical information

from Central Government. We apologise if people found it difficult. If we have simplified documents enough we receive criticism for not being technical or comprehensive enough."

■ Visit SSAGE's website, www.ssage.org.uk or call 01932 789987. The deadline for submissions is July 1. All comments will be submitted to the Secretary of State in October this year.

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