

## **Report on the Public Inquiry into the University of Reading's development plans for Shinfield**

The Parish Council would like to thank all the residents of the parish who attended the Public Inquiry into the University of Reading's three planning applications (1,350 homes plus infrastructure at Shinfield West, an Eastern Relief Road and SANG (suitable alternative natural greenspace)), which ended on Wednesday 16th November.

On that day the two main parties to the inquiry (the University and Wokingham Borough Council) each presented a summing-up of their case, as did the two minor parties, the Arborfield Garrison Local Consortium and the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust. During the summing up, it became clear that much still separates the two main parties: according to our interpretation, the Borough Council considers that 20 of the 28 original reasons for refusal of the 1,350 homes still stand.

The Public Inquiry was both thorough (covering design, layout, landscape, separation of settlements, the ecology, the affordable housing, the new schools, the flood risk, the skylarks, plus many other aspects) and fair, though the costs involved must have run into hundreds of thousands of pounds.

In our consultations with local residents we established that the two most significant issues are that the total number of new homes built both in the SDL itself and the parish as a whole should not exceed 2,500, and that the separation of the villages by substantial green gaps should be maintained. The Council's case rests on the firm foundations of the Borough Council's adopted Core Strategy, and Strategic Planning Document for the South of the M4 Strategic Development Location, and our own Parish Community Plan.

We are grateful to the Planning Inspector for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the residents, and pleased that several residents made individual representations to the Inspector. We hope his recommendation to the Secretary of State reflects the views of local people. A decision is not expected until the second quarter of 2012 and whatever the outcome, the building of these homes will be delayed until at least 2013.

We will remain in contact with the University and the other developers and continue to push WBC both through our Borough Councillors and directly with the officers to ensure that we are involved in these developments at the highest possible level to ensure local voices are heard and we are not ignored.

Indeed under the Localism Bill, which received Royal Assent earlier this week, there will be an opportunity for the Parish Council to extend our Community Plan into a Neighbourhood Plan, which may give us more control over local planning matters. We are already investigating this so that we can make rapid progress when the actual detail of the bill becomes available.

Marjory Bisset

Vice Chair, Shinfield Parish Council

22 November 2011