

A meeting of the Gravel Liaison Committee took place on 18th May 2009. The Laleham Residents were represented, as were too the Shepperton Residents. The meeting was chaired by the local Councillor for Laleham and Shepperton. Also there, was the planning officer from the County Council. Shepperton Aggregates were represented by 3 of their people. The formal meetings will take place twice a year – next, at end September – but there will also be informal contacts in between times. What follows is not a formal record of the meeting but a note of some points, which emerged and which may be of interest to Association members.

Demand for gravel is currently slow which means fewer current lorry movements but extends the time frame over which the gravel deposits will need to be extracted. That said, Home Farm is nearing the end of its production. Infilling and restoration takes place alongside extraction in a continuous but time-lagged process. Much of Home Farm is also therefore already restored as well. When Home Farm is completed, Shepperton Aggregates hope to work the small parcel of Shepperton Studios land at the top of Littleton Lane where a film set is currently being erected. Following that, work would begin at Manor Farm. Lastly, the land underneath the processing site in Littleton Lane would be worked and the machinery then all disassembled. And that will be it, albeit in some year's time. Basically, restoration is planned to be 100% to fields at Home Farm and Shepperton Studios. And Manor Farm and the land at the processing plant on Littleton Lane will be lakes.

We found that Shepperton Aggregates are sensitive to the nuisance gravel extraction causes to local people and to the high emotions that it arouses. Rightly so. And it is to the advantage of us all that they wish, within the constraints of their business, to be good neighbours. Other players are our elected Councillors, and the Council officials for whom they are responsible. Laleham is where it is now because of their actions. But they are our levers to press and if we want to come near to where we want to be in the future, local people will need to press them.

We raised a number of issues, including the following.

Lorry movements

The current agreement allows 66 gravel/infill lorry movements a day through the village – that is, one lorry going there and back equals two movements. Although gravel extraction will continue for longer than originally planned, the gravel companies accept that the number of lorry movements should remain at a maximum of 66 daily. (Comment. Following frequent breaches an attempt was made a few year's ago to sanction an increase in this figure. Thanks (only) to vigorous action by the Committee of the Laleham Residents Association in arranging local opposition to the change, the figure of 66 movements was reconfirmed by the County Council. We shall nevertheless still need to remain on our guard against illicit additional movements by independent companies).

Quality of infill material

We were convincingly reassured about the quality of infill material which is being used in site restoration. The Environment Agency and local government officials have an important role in overseeing this. And Shepperton Aggregates' reputation is also at stake here. So we all have an interest in common in getting this right. (Comment. The controls preventing the disposal of harmful waste in amongst the infill looked to be properly up to the task. But we shall of course continue to take an interest in this area until all operations are over).

The conveyor Gravel is currently conveyed from Home Farm by a conveyor which travels in a tunnel underneath the Shepperton Road to the processing site in Littleton Lane. Provided that planning permission is given, this tunnel will also be used for the gravel from the Studios' land and later for the gravel from Manor Farm. A second conveyor is proposed to cross the Ashford Road to bring the gravel first to the Home Farm site and thence to Littleton Lane. The second conveyor could be either by bridge or by tunnel. A tunnel would be more expensive but much less of a nuisance. For the latter reason, Shepperton Aggregates have, almost finally, decided in favour

of a tunnel. (Comment. We shall keep this under review to ensure that the tunnel option is the one selected if and when planning permission is granted for Manor Farm).