

Copy of verbal presentation by Rita Atkinson, Chair, Sutton Courtenay Parish Council to the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22nd April 2026

Mr. Chairman and members of this committee – thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. In my capacity as Chair of Sutton Courtenay Parish Council, I speak to agenda item 8 – the report on OCC's Minerals and Waste (M&W) responsibilities.

Our request to you is to recommend an independent review of the current procedures and processes in place used to determine M&W planning applications, monitor planning conditions and enforcement of breaches.

We come to you because, according to the OCC website this Committee can exercise influence on OCC's work, for example, by challenging and improving performance:

- challenging the way things are done;
- bringing in the views and evidence of local people, service users and citizens;
- and making evidence-based recommendations to the cabinet.

We also fully appreciate that your remit is not to examine individual cases but to have an overview and any recommendation you make can only be in that capacity.

Any reference I make here to Sutton Courtenay's experience should only be regarded as a case study to substantiate our request.

Since the 1930s Sutton Courtenay and its neighbouring parish of Appleford have hosted minerals and waste operations on a site that straddles both the parishes with a total area of about 264 hectares – enough to accommodate 700 full sized football pitches. It started with gravel extraction and subsequently landfill waste was used to fill up the resultant holes. Over the years other operations such as composting have also been introduced. With village expansion due to new housing developments, the closest dwelling is less than 70m from the western boundary of the site. Further south, the village's only safe recreational space is less than 30m from the western site boundary. The closure date for this site has repeatedly been extended with the use of s73 applications and is currently 2030 – a hundred years after operations started!

Over the years the parish council has responded to Minerals and Waste planning applications as a consultee. However, it has become increasingly frustrated by the:

- delays in resolving applications;
- the plethora of s73 applications that are submitted to vary or remove previously agreed planning conditions to the extent that it becomes impossible to track back to the original application;
- several iterations with the applicant.

We did write to this committee in July 2025, and are grateful to the chairman for commissioning the report that is before you today. It clearly sets out the roles responsibilities, processes, procedures etc. to carry out the Planning department's work. The messages of resource shortage and work overload are loud and clear.

At paragraph 3 it is acknowledged that *'Decisions taken through minerals and waste planning have long-term implications, often spanning decades, and require careful balancing of environmental protection, **community impacts**, infrastructure needs and national policy requirements.'*

There several mentions of community impact, public interest and community and stakeholder engagement in the report and it is that aspect that I wish to focus on here. With reference to paragraph numbers in the report, I give a few examples:

Para 64. - *Potential impacts from such factors as traffic, noise, dust on such as landscape, biodiversity, water environment and local amenity are assessed. In accordance with paragraph 39 of the NPPF, officers are required to approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.*

We note that officers are required officers are required to approach decisions on proposed developments in a positive and creative way and work proactively with applicants. It is not clear what is meant by positive and creative in this context. Currently Sutton Courtenay has seen absolutely no improvement in its social and environmental conditions due to the M&W operations. In its parish

Para 71 – *Two KPIs on Minerals and Waste Development Management Applications team's functions -KP1 speed of decision making and the Council's current performance over the measured period of January 2024 to December 2025 is 100% i.e. all planning applications were determined within the statutory time or agreed extended period.*

Our question here relates to the meaning of 'agreed extended period'. In our letter of 1st July 2025 we gave the examples of applications that took over 5 years for determination. Should there not be a limit to the 'agreed extended time period'? We feel that this should be an area that should be explored more to increase efficiency.

Para 99. - *Equality and inclusion considerations are embedded within plan-making, development management, and monitoring and enforcement processes through public consultation, statutory engagement, and transparent decision-making.*

The submissions of section 73 applications to modify planning conditions of a previous s73s, bit like the Russian Dolls, means that oversight is lost and meaningful consultation is impossible and the whole process becomes very opaque to the public that is trying to respond to a consultation.

Conclusion

Our particular focus in bringing the request for an independent review of the work of the planning department to you is to support the planning department in achieving its aspirations to have meaningful community consultations and minimise community impact of the Minerals and Waste operations within the county. We appreciate the constraints under which the department has to work.

However, currently the communities feel the frustration of not being able to engage constructively with the process because of the constantly changing goal posts by the applicant through S73s and delays in determination of applications and follow up of breaches in planning conditions. It also means that measures that may be applied to further reduce community impact are not fed back because the continuity between the original application and the submitted s73 is lost to the layperson.

As a suggestion the Authority Monitoring Reports could include the length of time taken to determine applications and the reasons.