

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Personal Details

1.1.1 My name is Bob Schofield and I appear at this inquiry on behalf of the Stop Pyestock bLot Act Today (SPLAT) campaign group. I am a long term resident of Fleet and Church Crookham (1974) and more recently, since 1989, a resident of the Pondtail area of Fleet. I have an Honours Degree in Civil Engineering, I am a Chartered Civil Engineer and a Chartered Member of the Institution of Water and Environmental Managers with over 30 years experience in civil engineering and environmentally related projects. I have in more recent years acquired a degree in law from Reading University and operate on a part time basis as a private consultant. I appear at this inquiry as a local resident and as a member of SPLAT who has spent the last two years analysing and researching the proposed development at Pyestock.

1.2 Issues to be addressed in this Proof of Evidence

- 1.2.1 Sustainability and sustainable development operate at many levels from the individual site, to the community, the region, the nation and ultimately globally. Policies are developed at each of these levels to accommodate the principles of sustainability which cascade down through the policy tiers. A review has been undertaken at each level of policy, to examine the proposed development in relation to meeting policy objectives
- 1.2.2 Sustainability is an overarching principle which PPS1: Sustainable Development states is "to promote outcomes in which environmental, economic and social objectives are achieved together." Proposed developments will create conflicts which require a balancing of the social, economic and environmental impacts to achieve a sustainable outcome. It is this balancing of the facets of sustainable development that requires the Wisdom of Solomon. Green extremists demand the greatest weight and the greatest protection be given to the natural environment. Purely

commercial interest would place the greatest weight on economic development, but as stated in Government's highest level policy PPS1 "economic development can deliver environmental and social benefits". The implication being that economic development has been to the detriment of environmental and social issues.

- 1.2.3 Perhaps the most tangible barometer of sustainability is the perceived "quality of life"; locally accessible employment, a good living environment and ready access to recreational and amenity facilities.
- 1.2.4 In March this year, the answer to the Daily Telegraph's question "Where is the best place to live in Britain?" was Hart. Hart District is regularly in the top five national quality of life surveys with well above average education, health and life expectancy. The Independent newspaper described Hart as "a tranquil corner of Hampshire."
- 1.2.5 Hart Local Development Framework places "Protection and enhancement of the quality of life of those living, working and visiting Hart District" as its first overall Strategic Objective.
- 1.2.6 My evidence will address the following issues:
 - 1 -Location
 - a) Strategic Gap
 - b) SPA's SSSIs, SINCS
 - c) Inadequate Access
 - d) Local Employment Base
 - e) Housing
 - 2 -"Green Traffic" Issues
 - a) Lack of an Effective Travel Plan
 - b) Car Parking Provision
 - c) In-commuting
 - 3 - Environmental consequences
 - a) Emissions
 - b) Loss of Carbon Sequestration
 - c) Carbon Embedded in Construction
 - 4 - Economic Considerations.
 - 5 - Conclusions

1.3 The Proposal

1.3.1 The planning application is to convert the substantially disused National Gas Turbine Establishment (NGTE) into a major road freight distribution depot operating on a 24 hours per day by 7 days a week basis. It is proposed to provide 1137 parking spaces, 60 lorry parking bays and substantial hard standing working areas approximately equal to the building area. The total area of the site is approximately 45 Ha.

1.4 Existing Conditions

1.4.1 The LDF, under a Spatial Profile of Hart District¹, defines the District as being “characterised by its wide variety of largely rural landscapes.” It describes countryside as “a functional and precious resource, also valuable as an amenity playing an important role in the local quality of life” It further describes Hart as “emerging from a period of extensive and intensive development”, going on to state that “Not all the 20th century development can be seen as beneficial and it has brought with it significant pressures on the local infrastructure” Historically, Fleet in particular, has been dependent on major institutional employers, the MOD, the RAE and NGTE (Pyestock) together with a significant London focused commuting population.

1.4.2 The District’s local employment provision is based primarily in the Blackwater Valley but has been enhanced by new commercial developments around Fleet and Hook. The whole area is associated with the new technology industries (knowledge economy) which in turn spawns small to medium businesses servicing the major employers. The majority of local industry is therefore small scale high technology based.

1.4.3 Hart falls within the Western Corridor Blackwater Valley Sub-region within the South East Plan. The introduction to the area policies

¹ Hart Local Development Framework Core Strategy Preferred Options paragraphs 35 -52
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recognises particular challenges faced by the sub-region which set the scene for my discussion:

- *How to realise economic potential of the area without compromising the quality of life of residents*
- *Achieve a better balance between the location and growth of jobs and homes while protecting the areas environmental assets, including the SPA*
- *Deliver the requirements for physical, social and environmental infrastructure needed to support existing and future economic and housing growth.*

1.4.4 It is relevant that North Hampshire is no longer designated as a development area. The South East Plan recognises Reading, Basingstoke and Bracknell as major areas of development.

2 LOCATION

2.1 Paraphrasing the South East Plan, the key issues in relation to Pyestock as a suitable location for development are:

Can it achieve economic benefit without compromising the quality of life of local residents?

Does it achieve a balance between labour availability and jobs?

Does it protect the areas environmental assets?

Is there adequate infrastructure to sustain the development?

The lack of adequate road infrastructure is a major concern because of the consequences on local communities and the local economy. Increased congestion and reduced safety on our roads is not compatible with sustainable development.

2.2 PPG4, Paragraph 12 specifically refers to modern distribution facilities and states: *Sites for such developments are best located away from urban areas, where the nature of the traffic is likely to cause congestion and wherever possible should be capable of access by rail or water transport*

2.1 Strategic Gap

- 2.1.1 Locating the development with a designated Strategic Gap requires it to meet the conditions of Hampshire Structure Plan Policy G1, Local Plan Policies CON 19, DEV12 and DEV13. These establish the function of the Strategic Gap and set the parameters for development within the Gap for sites with existing planning approval. Breaches of these policies are dealt with in other evidence. As a consequence of the primary function of the Strategic Gap, it provides significant amenity and recreational space together with habitats for areas of ecological and environmental importance.
- 2.1.2 Regional Planning Guidance RPG9 (South East Plan) Policy Q4, directs that *"land in the urban fringe should be enhanced, effectively managed and appropriately used."* *"Development plans should amongst other things ensure enhancement and better management of the urban fringe, for example, through the identification of areas of importance for nature conservation or recreation or coherent areas suitable for the continuation of agricultural uses."* This policy is most relevant in the case of Pyestock due to the presence of the Strategic Gap and the local amenity areas that exist within it.
- 2.1.3 PPG4 - Industrial Commercial Development and Small Firms – further develops the argument by stressing *"that economic growth and a high quality environment have to be pursued together."* The guidance makes a specific point that some control can be provided by the introduction of planning conditions and gives examples of where it may be desirable to control times of operations or prevent weekend working in order to protect amenity. From the outset, the 24 hour a day 7 day a week operation of the proposed facility has been stated to be a cause of major public concern because of its close proximity to a significant recreational and amenity area as well as residential areas
- 2.1.4 Sight should not be lost of the fact that the original reason for the 24 hour operation of the development was because of the very large cross docked sheds, which by design require 24 hour operation. The evolution of the design has significantly reduced the scale of the

sheds and in the Detailed Planning Application 07/03197/MAJOR, none of the sheds are cross docked. The necessity for 24 hour, 7 day a week operation has therefore been superseded.

- 2.1.5 Regional Planning Guidance RPG9 (South East Plan) Policy E6 directs that *"Opportunities should be provided for leisure and recreation in, and access to, the country side in ways which retain and enhance its character."* As one of the functions of a Strategic Gap is to provide a clear separation between urban developments, by its very character it is the perfect location for accessible space.
- 2.1.6 Hart District Council's Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006 Chapter 2 opens with a commitment to **sustainable development** with the aim of *"maintaining and enhancing the Districts quality of life for both present and future inhabitants."* This is to be achieved *"by permitting appropriate development and protecting interests of acknowledged importance (including for example ecological biodiversity....)."* As discussed separately, it is the excessive development of the site, beyond the limits established in Local Policy DEV12 that makes the proposed development inappropriate. The additional harm that is caused by excess development causes additional damage to interests of acknowledged importance.
- 2.1.7 Local Plan Policy GEN1 establishes the certain guiding principles for acceptable development, requiring proposals to be *"in keeping with the local character by virtue of their scale, design, massing, height, prominence, materials, layout, landscaping, siting and density"* and to *"avoid any material loss of amenity to existing and adjoining residential, commercial, recreational, agricultural or forestry uses, by virtue of noise, disturbance, noxious fumes, dust, pollution or traffic."*
- 2.1.8 As the character of the locality is defined by the Strategic Gap, which has particular importance as open and undeveloped land², these two conditions are **flagrantly breached** by the proposed development of very large sheds which are totally out of keeping with the local environment and produce significant levels of traffic 24 hours a day.

² Local Plan policy CON19
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- 2.1.9 The proposed new roundabout along the New Ively Road, the conversion of the roundabout on the Minley Link Road into a signalised T junction and the widening of Bramshot Road will require extensive road marking, signage, lighting and loss of trees and landscaped road verges constitutes infrastructure that will have an unacceptable impact both visually and environmentally on an amenity area and are therefore in breach of Policy GEN5 and CON19 by way of diminishing the Strategic Gap.
- 2.1.10 The Strategic Gap reinforces the LDF Core Strategy objective of *“protecting and enhancing the characteristics of the District which promote local distinctiveness and identity”⁴*. That identity is protected by preventing coalescence.
- 2.1.11 Future direction is given in LDF Preferred Policy 20 which gives commitment to the Strategic Gap and precludes development that would erode visually or physically the separation of towns and villages within or adjoining the district. We contest that the mass, scale and nature of the proposed development would seriously erode the currently fragile separation of Fleet and communities on the District Boundary and this warrants refusal.

2.2 SPA’s SSSIs, SINCS

- 2.2.1 The development is located in close proximity to a number of sites of special interest including the Thames Basin Heath SPA, SSSIs and SINCS. Separate evidence is presented on our ecological concerns. The discussion here addresses the weight that should be given to environmental impacts in relation to sustainable development.
- 2.2.2 PPG9 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - makes special provision for protecting SPAs and SSSIs and states the latter should be given a **high degree of protection** (Paragraph 7). Where any proposed development is either within or outside a SSSI, planning permission should not normally be granted if it is **likely** to have an adverse effect (Paragraph 8). The burden of proof of damage is

⁴ Objective C)

not high, but the level of protection is. Significant weight should therefore be given to protecting these protected environments.

- 2.2.3 Paragraph 13 recognises the benefit of re-using previously developed sites but calls for the retention of biodiversity interest, or to have it incorporated into the development. Although there are proposals to relocate one SINC within the site, despite suggestions that this will be ineffectual, two other SINCS will be totally destroyed by the proposed development. The significant increase in building floor space (81%), together with associated working areas, will involve the loss of trees and grassland. There has been little attempt to fit the development around the environment; the environment has been made to fit the development.
- 2.2.4 Regional Planning Guidance RPG9 (South East Plan) Chapter 6, Environmental Strategy of the Guidance places a significant weight on environmental protection by stating that *"a high quality environment is essential to the future prosperity of the South East. The effective protection of the environment and prudent use of natural resources are fundamental aspects of the vision for this Region which is highly urbanised and subject to development pressures."*
- 2.2.5 Policy E1 strongly reinforces this sentiment by directing that *"Priority should be given to protecting areas designated at International or National level either for their intrinsic nature conservation value, their landscape quality or their cultural importance."* Specific reference is made to Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
- 2.2.6 Local Plan Policies CON1, 2 and 3, which protect SPAs, SSSIs and SINCS, also establish substantial reasons why a development would be allowed that would adversely affect an SPA or SSSI. These reasons include;
- *Imperative reasons of overriding public interest*
 - *Human health grounds*
 - *Public safety*
 - *Beneficial consequences of primary importance to the environment.*
- 2.2.7 The conditions that control against unacceptable development are stringent and establish that the environmental protection of these

sites should be given a high weighting. Precaution would dictate that development should not be permitted except in very special circumstances.

- 2.2.8 Regional Policy⁵ addresses Green Infrastructure and promotes the provision and management of "*connected and substantial networks of accessible multifunctional green space.*" "*They should be managed with the primary aim of maintaining and improving biodiversity, but should also deliver recreational and cultural benefits and ensure that an improved and healthy environment is available for the benefit of present and future communities.*" The area of Fleet Pond and its adjoining fields and woods substantially meets this policy by providing recreational and cultural facilities. The Ministry of Defence manage much of the land to improve biodiversity by providing a mix of heath and woodland Flanking the area with a 24 hour x 7 day a week commercial operation that introduces significant numbers of lorries, vans and cars into the heart of a multifunctional green space, cannot improve the environment and the threat thereby posed to the local environment, biodiversity and the recreational amenity of the area should be given due weight.
- 2.2.9 Emerging Policy WCBV9 places restrictions on development close to the SPA and only accepts "appropriate forms of development." This implies that development is subordinate to environmental protection and should be balanced accordingly.
- 2.2.10 LDF Preferred Policy 5 - Thames Basin Heath SPA – also sets very stringent standards in that "*development will not be permitted... that has an adverse effect upon the TBH SPA*". The degree of adversity is not defined, so any adverse effect will be sufficient to weigh against development.
- 2.2.11 Preferred Policy 21 attributes significant weight to the importance of biodiversity and would only allow development "*where other material considerations outweigh such (adverse) effects and it is accompanied by evidence of appropriate measures to fully mitigate or compensate for these effects.*" This policy applies to

⁵ South East Regional Plan Policy CC8
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International (SPA) or National (SSSI) conservation areas and to SINCS and LNRs. So, again, development is subordinate to the environment unless "full mitigation" is achieved, which equates to no impact on the protected environments.

2.2.12 It can readily be seen that Policies at all levels place significant weight on protection of the environment and, specifically, SPAs, SSSIs and SINCs. The conditions that have to be satisfied before development might be permitted to proceed in the vicinity of such areas, meeting the need to protect and conserve those aspects of the environment which the Policies are designed to protect and enhance, are few and stringent. The impacts of a 24 x 7 commercial operation within less than a 100 metres of Fleet Pond and its environs neutralises a valuable public open space and cannot have a neutral or benign impact on any of the designated protected areas, still less a positive impact. The above Policies therefore militate powerfully against the proposed development.

2.2.13 Finally, it must be noted in all of the above regards that whilst Hart boasts a rural character, a large proportion of the green space is not publicly accessible. Fleet Pond and the surrounding fields and woods are the equivalent of Fleet Park, a much used public amenity area. The potential for additional impacts to be caused to the SPA by driving people away from the immediate vicinity of the development is obvious. This, too, must be weighed in the balance against the proposal.

2.3 Inadequate Access

2.3.1 PPG13 contains the following guidance, highly material to the appeal proposal: *"where possible locate development generating substantial freight movements such as distribution warehousing away from congested central areas and residential areas and ensure adequate access to trunk roads."*

2.3.2 These criteria are repeated in a major study undertaken for the West Midlands Employment Land Advisory Group⁶. At paragraph

⁶ West Midlands Regional Logistics Study, Stage 2 Final Report September 2005 by MDS TRansmodal Ltd. Savills and Regeneris Ltd.
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5.1, the report establishes criteria for identifying sites for Regional Logistics Centres, as follows:

- *Have good access to the national motorway network or major trunk roads*
- *Benefit from good access to labour*
- *Be capable of offering suitable sites away from incompatible neighbours, such as housing*

At page 39, the report goes on to define "good access" to the road network as being "*served by the national motorway network or a major non-motorway route which exhibits low levels of network stress (congestion) and allow reasonable vehicle operating speeds.*"

2.3.3 Current traffic conditions strongly suggest that the A287 Minley Link Road is not an adequate access to the trunk road, and the M3 already exhibits network stress and is predicted to deteriorate progressively with time⁷.

2.3.4 It must be pointed out at this time that junction 4A of the M3 is not, as asserted by the Appellant, 1/2mile from the site⁸. The Appellant has stated that the documents issued in August 2008 were to take account of comments made at the Planning Meeting and other occasions; they have not. It was pointed out to the Appellant by Councillor Wheale and SPLAT that this was a gross understatement of the actual distance. Both SEEDA and SEERA appear to have relied on this erroneous assertion as implying good access to the motorway.

2.3.5 Moreover, between the site and the motorway is a single carriageway "rural" road with three or four roundabouts, depending upon which direction is chosen on the M3, and a two lane rail bridge. This road together with Summit Avenue, exhibit regular congestion in the AM and PM peak periods. This is not stated as the peak "hour", since traffic surveys have demonstrated that the peak periods are stretched, extending for longer than the conventional hour.

2.3.6 The roundabout immediately south of the M3, forming part of J4A, merges traffic travelling north with the slip traffic coming off the

⁷ Highways South East Report 2008

⁸ Environmental Statement August 2008, paragraph 1.31, page 7

westbound M3 with no priority right of way. The two lanes merge into a single lane on the bridge over the motorway. This unusual junction arrangement will become more dangerous as the proportion of HGVs in the traffic travelling north to access the eastbound M3 increases.

- 2.3.7 The Highways Agency has stated that J4A of the M3 is operating at capacity⁹, that the M3 is already operating at close to capacity especially at peak hours¹⁰. and that by 2026 the area of the M3 around J4A will be operating at over 150% stress levels, extending congestion well beyond peak hours¹¹.
- 2.3.8 The current Hampshire County Freight consultation document acknowledges the M3 problems, but also identifies that there is planned expansion of Southampton docks to increase capacity from 1.5 million containers (TEU) in 2006 to 3.7 million TEUs. To try and reduce the impact of road freight, plans are stated to increase rail freight from current 27.3% to 40% and by sea from 5% to 25%. Even if these ambitious changes in modes of transport are achieved, there will be a 32.8% increase in road haulage from 0.975 million units to 1.295 million units. A significant percentage of this increase will be routed along the M3.
- 2.3.9 The Summary Document to the Freight Strategy expresses the concern that a proposed distribution facility at New Greenham Park could add 53,000 HGV movements per annum on the single carriageway A339. Yet Hampshire County Council has expressed no obvious concern to 292,000 HGV movements per annum¹², or more realistically 500,000 HGV movements per annum,¹³ but potentially in excess of 800,000 HGVs per year¹⁴, on the single carriageway A327.
- 2.3.10 North Hampshire has, potentially, three new road freight only distribution facilities, Greenham, Andover and Pyestock. This is in addition to existing facilities at Nursling, Basingstoke, Bracknell and

⁹ Quote 2 HA letters porter related to QEB and Corby to earlier QinetiQ application

¹⁰ HA Statement of Evidence item 13

¹¹ Fig 7.2 HA's South East Area Report

¹² Based upon the appellants proposed 800 HGV movements per day cap

¹³ Assessed by SPLAT and presented in Evidence on the traffic impacts of development.

¹⁴ Preliminary Draft Traffic Capping Agreement.

Chertsey. Because of the scale and impact of Pyestock, its implications are of more than local concern: a 45 Ha site is big enough for a multi-modal freight interchange; the proposed development therefore needs to be addressed on a regional basis and not in isolation. It is, in this regard, to be lamented that neither the Hampshire Freight Strategy nor the South East Plan adequately addresses the issue of sustainable freight distribution and, in particular, appropriate locations for distribution centres.

- 2.3.11 The modified Section 9 of RPG9 (Regional Policy Guidance until agreement of South East Spatial Strategy) states at paragraph 9.76 that *"the capacity of the highway network is at present insufficient to accommodate the demand for road based freight movement, resulting in unreliable journey times. This unreliability in turn affects business efficiency."* There is, accordingly, a pressing need to get freight off the road for environmental and economic reasons.
- 2.3.12 This development cannot be viewed in isolation within the context of Regional policy. In particular, there are likely to be locations within the region, especially in the Southampton or Portsmouth areas, that can beneficially address sustainability through being developed as integrated rail and port facilities - providing a social benefit by way of jobs, reducing green house gas emissions by cutting the amount of freight on the road, and thereby contributing to sustainable economic development. The development proposed for Pyestock might impede any such development from coming forward, whilst simultaneously aggravating congestion of the local and the national highway networks and thereby impacting adversely upon economic productivity and competitiveness. It is not only unsustainable in its own right therefore, it might also prevent or delay more sustainable developments from being progressed. The Appellant has failed to look at and evaluate any alternative locations however, whether in this or any other context.
- 2.3.13 Local Plan Policy GEN1 limits development to locations where it will *"not give rise to traffic flows on the surrounding road network, which would cause material detriment to the amenities of nearby*

properties and settlements or to highway safety¹⁵; and "not create the need for highway improvements which would be detrimental to the character and setting of roads within the conservation areas or rural lanes in the District."

- 2.3.14 It is the scale of development proposed, far exceeding the limitations imposed by DEV12, that exacerbates the problem. Redevelopment of the site on a scale required by DEV12, and more sympathetic therefore with the function of the Strategic Gap, would be unlikely to create the significant traffic related problems attendant upon the appeal proposal.
- 2.3.15 As it is, the number of vehicle movements and the 24 hour distribution of traffic will certainly impact on nearby properties in the vicinity of Minley Link Road and increase the risk of accidents through the significant increase in HGVs on already congested roads
- 2.3.16 Policy GEN6 addresses development which *"could create, intensify or expand noisy or noxious uses"* or *"which would generate volumes or types of traffic unsuited to the local area"*. It establishes criteria for development:
- (i) *The site is not located where the proposal would have a serious adverse effect on the amenities of existing housing and other sensitive uses such as schools, **or the recreational amenity of quiet areas of countryside; or***
 - (ii) *The proposal incorporates adequate noise abatement measures to alleviate any material loss in amenity*
- 2.3.17 The proposed development is for a 24 hour a day 7 days a week operation close to residential areas and immediately adjacent to one of the major amenity areas for residents of Hart. The developer's noise assessment has totally failed to demonstrate that noise impacts can be adequately mitigated and therefore development should not be permitted
- 2.3.18 Policy GEN8 seeks to control pollution and, in particular, will not allow development that could significantly adversely affect the quality of air. Introducing a development that will involve at least two hundred and eighty eight thousand (288,000) HGV movements

¹⁵ Sub-clauses (viii) and (ix)
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per year, and close to a million car movements per year, in the immediate vicinity of significant residential and amenity areas is bound adversely to affect local air pollution with inherent health risks.

- 2.3.19 The originally drafted version of Policy CC5 - Infrastructure and Implementation - in the South East Plan recognised that one of the major problems in the area is a severe lack of infrastructure, and that the *"scale and pace of development will be dependent on there being sufficient capacity in existing infrastructure to meet the areas current need.."*
- 2.3.20 The Panel's recommendation was to remove the conditional approach to development, but the Secretary of State has suggested a new introductory paragraph:
"The scale and pace of development will depend on sufficient capacity being available in existing infrastructure to meet the needs of new development. Where this cannot be demonstrated the scale and pace of development will be dependent on additional capacity being released through demand management measures, or better management of existing infrastructure... Where new development creates a need for additional infrastructure a programme of delivery should be agreed before development begins.
- 2.3.21 This sentiment is repeated in Sub-Regional Policy WCBV6, whereby all new development will be contingent on securing all necessary supporting infrastructure. The same theme is carried down to the local level where Strategic Objective E) of the LDF states: *"meeting future development needs in sustainable locations and ensuring that new development is adequately supported by the necessary infrastructure."*
- 2.3.22 The roads providing the major approach to the development, Minley Link Road and Summit Avenue, exhibit severe signs of distress in the peak traffic periods, demonstrating inadequate local road infrastructure to cope with existing traffic conditions. A failure to recognise this problem will have significant socio-economic repercussions for the North Hants area; and yet the Planning Application only provides supporting infrastructure that increases

road network capacity, or improves the safety and reliability of the network, at Windy Gap.

2.3.23 The road network in the immediate vicinity of the major access to the site is heavily congested for several hours a day. A very recent planning application by QinetiQ 07/01273/Major states that the peak traffic period now extends to one and half hours in the morning and the evening. This position will only deteriorate with the additional traffic load from the proposed development.

2.3.24 In particular, the Appellant has not demonstrated that the proposed modifications to the local road network will have any positive impact. In the case of the Minley Link Road junction modification, the Appellant is relying on work carried out by the HCC highway engineers with no definitive proof that the revised arrangement can accommodate the additional traffic loads¹⁶, given that the 24 hour, 7 days a week nature of the operation will totally redefine peak periods.

2.4 Local Employment Base

2.4.1 The West Midlands Regional Logistics Study – Stage 2; September 2005, characterised one of the main criteria for the location of a distribution depot as –“good access to labour.” This was further defined as being:

- a sub region of employment need
- reasonable levels of NVQ level 1 and 2 employees
- opportunity to improve qualification levels
- being a net exporter of lower order labour
- having a competitive wage rate for relevant low order occupations.

2.4.2 These criteria are the total opposite of those that prevail in Hart District and its immediate surrounding neighbours:

- a). Hart District has one of the lowest unemployment levels in Hampshire, having a rate of only 0.4% (based on a population of 87,000 = 348 persons);

- b). The combined area of Hart and Rushmoor had a total of 966 unemployed claimants in March 2008
 - c). Hart has education standards above the national average (Hart LDF, Core Strategy, paragraph 46).
 - d). Hart has a highly skilled workforce with the second highest average household income in the country
 - e). Hart has a large outbound commuting population; inbound commuting primarily relates to the higher technical knowledge based industries.
- 2.4.3 Moreover, over 80% of the 1,600 mega depot jobs will be lower paid warehouse staff and drivers. The Appellant tries to convince us the majority of these jobs will be filled by local residents, but as there are insufficient unemployed claimants within the immediate area he has extended the local labour catchment to include Basingstoke and Deane, which covers an area up to 40 miles from Pyestock.
- 2.4.4 The proposed development therefore introduces a type of industry that has no sympathy with the traditional employment base in the District. It is not an opportunity to re-deploy large numbers of lower grade employees released into the market place by the decline of traditional manufacturing industry.
- 2.4.5 The application is not, therefore, supported by LDF Preferred Policy 10, which defines future Employment Provision in the District. The development is the antithesis of the aims of this policy –it does not meet the prescribed needs of the local economy.

2.5 Housing

- 2.5.1 Further, Hart has higher than average house prices, and insufficient affordable housing is known to be an ongoing major cause of concern. Yet, the Appellant ignores the disproportionate demand on affordable housing that would be made by the distribution depot staff if they are to reside within the immediate area. This will adversely impact local first time buyers and key workers such as teachers, nurses and community care workers trying to establish a foothold in the District.

3 "GREEN TRAFFIC" ISSUES

- 3.1 The supporting text to emerging policy WCBV1 addresses a number of factors that will influence the distribution of development within the sub-region. One key issue identified is Transport: *"The WCBV core strategy is to a significant degree transport led. This is in recognition of the paradox that while a key advantage of the sub-region is its location and accessibility to international and regional transport hubs, congestion and other pressures on transport may put at risk future economic, social and environmental progress.....In particular and in accordance with those policies local authorities will need to promote locations and forms of development and manage mobility to a) reduce the need to travel, b) reduce average journey distances and c) make it possible for a greater proportion of trips to be made by alternatives to single occupancy car use."*
- 3.2 This makes it abundantly clear that unless severe constraints are placed on travel, further development of the area will be unsustainable. The negative social and economic impacts will outweigh any potential benefit.

3.1 Lack of an Effective Travel Plan

- 3.1.1 The Appellant has paid lip service to this guidance by the suggested use of a travel plan which will encourage use of public transport or provide facilities for cyclists. Employees living within 2km of the site will be denied access by car. The key flaw in the proposals is that there are insufficient local resources to fill the numbers and types of jobs that will be created on the site. The development will in fact encourage incommuting from outside the immediate area.
- 3.1.2 In recognition of the fact that there are inadequate public services, the Appellant has made several references to a "bespoke bus service"¹⁷ within his Travel Plan, but only commits to investigating

¹⁷ Detailed Planning Application 07/03197/MAJOR, ES Appendix C1, Travel Plan paragraph 5.23
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the possibility and acknowledges that it could be a taxi or bus service.¹⁸

- 3.1.3 The Appellant recognises the limited access to the site by any form of public transport and undertakes to invest in cycle ways and footpaths but again with no evidence there is a locally accessible work force that could use alternative means of access.
- 3.1.4 Despite a commitment to "green travel" the Appellant's proposal for a new access on New Ively Road actually severs one of the best cycle ways in the District which runs parallel to the road. If shift working is anticipated the junction would be busy throughout the day to accommodate normal working hours and three shift changes. Crossing a road in close proximity to a roundabout is hazardous in any location.

3.2 Car Parking Provision

3.2.1 The Appellant exposes an even lesser commitment to a truly sustainable development through the provision of parking spaces. At paragraph 4.1 of the ES to the Detailed Planning Application it is suggested that 1300 parking spaces will be provided. The Design and Access Statement at paragraph 4.15 suggest 1 space /104m², the equivalent of 1213 spaces in relation to the new development. The Travel Plan at paragraph 1.2 states there will be 1137 spaces and paragraph 4.3 suggests a target of 70% car usage by 2008, the equivalent of 1120 spaces. Paragraph 5.36 of the Travel Plan attempts to put these anomalies to rest by establishing a basis for 1137 spaces as follows:

- 250 office workers = 175 spaces (70%)
- 500 day shift = 350 spaces (70%)
- 500 pm shift = 350 spaces (70%)
- 350night shift = 262 spaces (75%)
- 1600 total = 1137 total (71%)

3.2.2 It was pointed out at the Special Planning Meeting that this represented nearly three times the normal allocation of spaces to B8

¹⁸ Travel Plan paragraph 5.24
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development approved by HCC, but was accepted by HCC because of the shift arrangements.

- 3.2.3 In reality this provision represents **no restraint** on a free use of personal car transport. If one, very generously, allowed a complete shift overlap, the maximum number of employees on site, at any one time, would be the changeover of morning and afternoon shifts with the office staff present, equal to $250 + 500 + 500 = 1,250$ employees, assuming 100% attendance. This condition would last no more than one hour in the day. This is the equivalent of 91% provision of parking spaces for the total employees simultaneously on the site. Either side of the shift change there are only 750 employees present on site, leaving 387 empty parking spaces. There is no need for a travel plan! Normal absence would mean that any one who wanted to travel by car could.
- 3.2.4 A truly sustainable solution would **apply the 70%** car usage factor promoted by the Appellant to the office employees, one main shift and a 100 car allowance for shift change over. **The maximum requirement would be $175 + 350 + 100 = 625$ spaces.** This would represent a real commitment to sustainable travel and control the use of personal vehicles.

3.3 In-commuting

- 3.3.1 The majority of the proposed 1600 jobs on the Pyestock site would be warehouse goods sorting, shift workers which would be highly unlikely to reduce outward commuting, but generate instead considerable amounts of inward commuting, thus increasing local traffic congestion, local pollution and increasing the need to travel all contrary to the Objectives and Aims of the Hart District Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006, Chapter 2.
- 3.3.2 There is a recognised national shortage of HGV qualified drivers¹⁹ with the greatest shortage in the South East and Midlands.
- 3.3.3 Because of the identified shortfall in the local labour market, as already stated, the Appellant has extended the employment

¹⁹ West Midlands Regional Logistics Study – Stage 2 page 21
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catchment area to include Basingstoke and Dean up to 40 miles travelling distance. These intermediate journeys are less likely to make public transport attractive. Neither Fleet nor Farnborough Stations are within easy walking distance of the site, especially in bad weather or for shift workers

- 3.3.4 In-commuting will run contrary to LDF Preferred Policy 15 which directs that *“development will be refused where it is considered either to adversely affect existing highways...or cycling networks”* Conversely developments that lead to a relief in congestion, improve road safety or lead to environmental benefits will be supported
- 3.3.5 Regional Planning Guidance RPG9 (South East Plan). paragraph 3.5.11, provides that *“Access to jobs, services, leisure and cultural facilities should be less dependent on longer distance movement [our emphasis] and there should be increased ability to meet normal travel needs through walking, cycling and public transport with reduced reliance on the car.”* This addresses the fundamentals of sustainability: that communities should have a high level of locally accessible jobs bringing appropriate work to the workforce not the other way round.
- 3.3.6 To this same end, Regional Planning Guidance RPG9 (South East Plan) Policy RE4 directs that development should “reduce business related travel” and *“encourage development which maximises environmental and social benefits.*
- 3.3.7 Sub –Regional Policy WCBV1, identifies the major and minor Regional Hubs as follows:
- Basingstoke
 - High Wycombe
 - Reading
 - Slough
- Sub –regional hubs:
- Bracknell
 - Maidenhead
 - Newbury

- 3.3.8 A single development of 45 Ha with a significant transport and traffic impact would be better integrated within a designated development hub. Creating a major employment centre in an area of low labour availability and limited infrastructure distorts the balance between jobs, housing and transport and runs counter to sustainable development.

4 UNSUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

4.1 Emissions

- 4.1.1 PPS1 has been supplemented with a further direction on Climate Change. It clarifies that carbon emissions are one of the contributors to greenhouse gas effects. One of the objectives of the Supplement is “to help secure the fullest possible use of sustainable transport for moving freight, public transport, cycling and walking; and, which overall, reduce the need to travel, especially by car”²⁰. This concern for assessing the CO₂ emissions from the site is reflected in DfT’s Guidance on Transport Assessment, where in paragraph 4.7, under “Baseline Transport Data”, it calls for “baseline emissions data for the site, broken down by mode.” Establishing a baseline is required in order to establish the impact of development and its carbon emissions to test its compliance with Supplement to PPS1. However, there has been no attempt to assess the CO₂ emissions from the development traffic.
- 4.1.2 PPG4 also identifies the need to reduce green house gases and locate development in areas which reduce the need to travel and can be served by more energy efficient modes of transport, such as rail or water (paragraph 11).
- 4.1.3 The Draft South East Plan Policy CC1: Sustainable Development establishes similar priorities for the South East:
- *Achieve sustainable levels of resource use*
 - *Reduce green house gas emissions associated with the region*

²⁰ PPS1 Supplement: Planning and Climate Change, page 10 paragraph 9
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- *Ensure the SE is prepared for the inevitable impacts of climate change*
- 4.1.4 Recently announced Government policy is to reduce CO₂ emissions by 80%. This target must impact upon road freight. There has to be a concerted strategy to reduce road miles either by greater use of alternative modes of transport or rationalising the location of distribution centres. Proliferating distribution facilities in an uncoordinated manner will frustrate optimisation. Control can be introduced through the planning process.

4.2 Loss of Carbon Sequestration

- 4.2.1 The Supplement to PPS1 recognises the benefit of naturally occurring carbon absorbers which in turn help reduce the total carbon emissions. It encourages Authorities to “recognise the potential of, and encourage, those land uses and land management practices that help secure carbon sinks”²¹. Despite this direction there has been no carbon assessment by the Appellant. Indeed, there has not even been any clear indication given of the loss of tree and grass cover within the site and the associated off-site road works and the loss of carbon sequestration potential.
- 4.2.2 Numbers supplied by Prologis²² suggest that a Hectare (Ha) of grassland sequesters about 3 tons of CO₂/year and a Ha of woodland 540tons/year. Only considering the building footprint, excluding service yards and parking areas, there will be a loss of 5.5 Ha of mixed grass and woodland as a result of the proposed development. This equates to around 1480 tCO₂/year added to the atmosphere. A typical family car emits around 4 tCO₂/yr²³, so the loss of vegetation alone effectively adds 370 cars to the carbon balance. This is in addition to the unaccounted CO₂ emissions from the cars, lorries and HGVs created by the development.

²¹ PPS1 Planning and Climate Change, pages 5 and 12

²² Howbury Rail freight terminal Appeal APP/T2215/A/05/1185897 & APP/05120/A/1198457

²³ New Civil Engineer 27.03.08, page 17

4.3 Carbon Embedded in Construction

- 4.3.1 The Appellant claims that the buildings will be developed to a high level of sustainability, at least to BREEAM standards (which are in the process of being superseded). This is no more than should now be expected, but again this ignores the carbon that is fixed in construction.
- 4.3.2 For example, a cubic metre of concrete embeds around 40 tCO₂. The building footprint of the new sheds alone, without working areas, will contain 126,000 m³ of concrete assuming a metre deep base slab; this embeds 46,700 tCO₂, or around 11,000 car years, of emissions. Much of the environmental and climate change damage will have been done before the buildings are even brought into service. None of these vital sustainability issues are discussed in the ES.

5 ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 PPS1 addresses "Sustainable Economic Development". Paragraph 23 states: *"The Government is committed to promoting a strong, stable, and productive economy that aims to bring jobs and prosperity for all. Planning authorities should:*
- (i) Recognise that economic development can deliver environmental and social benefits;*
 - (ii) Recognise the wider sub-regional, regional or national benefits of economic development and consider these alongside any adverse local impacts;*
 - (iii) Ensure that suitable locations are available for industrial, commercial, retail, public sector (e.g. health and education) tourism and leisure developments, so that the economy can prosper;*
 - (ix) Ensure that development plans take account of the regional economic strategies of Regional Development Agencies, regional housing strategies, local authority community strategies and local economic strategies; and,*
 - (x) Identify opportunities for future investment to deliver economic objectives*

- 5.2 Regional Planning Guidance RPG9 (South East Plan) places this in the regional context by recognising that *"Economic opportunities should be increased by raising skills levels and reducing the disparities between different parts of the Region... and by managing the localised impacts of development in economically buoyant areas."* Policy RE5 directs that *"better use should be made of existing employment land resources."* Better use is characterised as embracing *"scope for intensification, scope for optimisation and for mixed employment use"*
- 5.3 From a sustainability perspective we endorse the re-use of brown field land. However, we seriously question whether the total deployment of the site, which represents 60% of the available employment land in Hart, for solely B8 development is "better" use as required by Policy RE5 above; and manifestly, it fails to provide "mixed uses". In particular, the level of skill and education in the area has been described as being above average, so a total commitment to B8 use inhibits the potential for raising local skill levels.
- 5.4 Moreover, by proposing excessive development which defies the restraints laid down in DEV12, imposed to maintain the character and function of the Strategic Gap, that character and function will be irreversibly damaged. Despite this, there has been no attempt to manage localised impacts.
- 5.5 The harms occasioned by the proposed development, to the Strategic Gap, to local ecology, to residential amenity (including through noise, light and air pollution) and in terms of sustainability, make it wholly unacceptable and in breach of Policy. In accordance with section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act it should be refused consent unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This entails that the Appellant would have to adduce compelling evidence capable of justifying the harm which would be occasioned, demonstrating for example that there is a compelling economic need which has to be met.
- 5.6 Moreover, and as set out in my Proof on the Strategic Gap, even if such a need could be demonstrated, the Appellant would also have to demonstrate that it could not more suitably be located elsewhere,

- outside a Strategic Gap and within an area where there is an available local workforce and where Policy CC1 of the South East Regional Plan which seeks to: *"Ensure the most deprived people also have an equal opportunity to benefit from and contribute to a better quality of life"* could be better complied with
- 5.7 However, no needs analysis has been conducted in respect of the proposed development to see whether it is needed for any essential economic or other reason; and no alternative sites have been considered to see whether an alternative location is available which might better meet any such need for the proposal as might have been found.
- 5.8 It is to noted in both regards that RPG9 Policy T6 states that, *"a fully integrated freight distribution system should be promoted which makes the most efficient and effective use of road, rail, inland waterways and coastal shipping. It calls for protection of "existing facilities and include proposals to safeguard sites for rail freight facilities."*
- 5.9 Whereas a rail-freight depot might, in an appropriate location (easily accessed by both a motorway and rail services, and with a large available local workforce) be economically and environmentally beneficial so as to justify the infliction of a degree of planning harm (as argued in the Radlett case), the same simply cannot be argued for a road-only depot for which there is no evidence of economic need, which is proposed in an area whose employment and education profile can only lead to in-commuting, and in a location also of such planning and environmental sensitivity as the appeal site. Indeed, far from being potentially beneficial, the appeal proposal is simply unsustainable. Moreover, the more road-only depots that are developed, the less likely it is that there will be market capacity for rail-freight facilities - an environmental and sustainable solution that better meets strategic regional policy.
- 5.10 The above is clearly supported by the supporting text to Sub Regional Policy WCBV 2 (was **WCBV5**), calling for "Smart Economic Growth", which is defined as achieving economic growth but without demanding additional labour. This indicates that economic prosperity can be maximised by:

- *Using existing employment land as efficiently as possible*
- *Taking account of any clustering and opportunities to promote key innovative higher value or knowledge based sectors with low environmental impact*
- *Driving up skills in accordance with policy RE4*
- *Improving productivity*
- *Increasing mobility and accessibility by a range of sustainable means*

It also qualifies this by adding “*seeking significant additional in-commuting is also unrealistic as a means of addressing any significant jobs-housing mismatch.*”

5.11 The proposed development not only fails to meet these objectives, but has the potential to harm the existing local economy. Points to demonstrate this include as follows:

- It is far from clear that B8 warehousing is an efficient use of land
- The proposal would not support developing and maintaining the local high skilled workforce.
- The area represents a cluster of high technology industry. The proposed development has no sympathy with the types of business that thrive in the area.
- Congestion already impacts local firms and a significant increase in traffic that extends the peak congestion periods could force firms to relocate due to losses in efficiency.
- It could cause a disproportionate demand for low-cost/affordable housing in an area of predominantly high cost housing and place increasing stress on this market driving other critical workers away from the area.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The development fails to maintain the nature and function of the Strategic Gap. Excessive development beyond that defined in Local Plan Policy DEV12 causes significant harm and there is no assessment of alternative sites in accordance with Structure Plan

- Policy G1 to demonstrate that the development could not be better and more sustainably located elsewhere.
- 6.2 Significant weight is given to protection of sites of special scientific and environmental interest. Development is not totally excluded, but the proposed road freight depot does not meet any of the strict criteria defining permissible development.
- 6.3 The local road network and the nearest motorway are showing signs of stress and are predicted to deteriorate with time. The Minley Link Road is not an adequate access to the motorway due to the presence of several roundabouts and a narrow railway bridge. Regular congestion is experienced now without the addition of development traffic.
- 6.4 Hart District and adjoining areas enjoy low levels of unemployment and higher than average levels of education. The majority of the jobs available on the site are for manual labour. This will have the consequence of either placing a high demand on affordable housing or result in significant in-commuting. Either scenario creates local unsustainable problems.
- 6.5 The travel plan places no restraint on access to the site by private car and does not adequately address the lack of public transport. Together with the lack of local labour resources, this will drive unsustainable levels of traffic onto the inadequate road network.
- 6.6 The available evidence supports our long held argument, raised with SEERA and SEEDA, that the proposed development has more than local implications and consequences. A development of this scale should be viewed on a regional basis and a careful evaluation made of the needs and benefits of alternative sites. It should address regional as well as local issues and contribute to the objective of reducing the economic disparity within the region.
- 6.7 There is no established detailed freight policy for the region which optimises freight routes and distribution centre locations. Allowing a development of this scale without fully evaluating the real alternatives in social, economic and environmental terms, including climate change implications, could jeopardise meeting many of the policy objectives within the Spatial Strategy time frame.

- 6.8 There has been no attempt to assess the development against Climate Change policy or to address the need to reduce green house gas emissions. Taking jobs to the work force reduces the need for travel. Creating jobs in a more deprived area would, on the other hand, improve the beneficiaries' quality of life and recreate a sense of community. Within a regional context there is the opportunity to rebalance the disparities between different parts of the region and support regeneration areas in the process, which has simply not been considered.
- 6.9 In particular, the most appropriate and sustainable location of a major distribution centre is one which will minimise road miles by looking at port-centric and inter-modal solutions, including rail; one which matches local labour availability and jobs, being in an area of higher unemployment, so as to reduce commuting; and one which is not in an area of planning and environmental sensitivity. This is not such a location.
- 6.10 Using Quality of Life as the barometer of the sustainability of the development, it has not been proven to provide access to better local jobs, and has the clear potential to adversely impact local firms and the local economy. It damages the local environment and much used public amenity areas surrounding the site reducing its recreational value. It will increase congestion on the local road network and negatively impact every motorist using the Minley Link Road and Summit Avenue. It has the potential to reduce many peoples enjoyment of their homes due to 24 hour, 7 day a week operations causing added noise pollution. There is no demonstrable social, environmental or economic benefit to justify the infliction of such harm. The proposal is unsustainable in terms of local and regional policy and should be rejected.