

**Joint Parish Group**  
**Clerk – Mrs Sherrie Babington**  
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Mr. Rob Jarman  
Head of Planning  
Maidstone Borough Council  
Maidstone House  
King Street  
ME15 6JQ

28th October 2013

Dear Mr Jarman

**MA/13/1549    Waterside Park M20 J8 Ashford Road, Hollingbourne.**

**Hybrid planning application (part outline part detailed) for the regrading of site to form development platforms including the creation of new bunds and batters; the development of a new industrial estate comprising up to 56000m<sup>2</sup> of B1 office/light industrial, B2 general industrial and B8 storage and distribution uses; ancillary cafe and crèche facilities; creation of a new access to the A20; new internal access road; parking, internal drainage, structural landscaping and the diversion of the existing footpath, with access to be determined and appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for subsequent approval. Detailed permission sought for the erection of a new warehouse building (23533m<sup>2</sup>) and associated offices (4145m<sup>2</sup>) with access, service yard, parking and landscaping.**

The Joint Parish Group (JPG) is a consortium of local parish councils south and east of the Maidstone urban area. The JPG comprise of 14 member parishes that collectively represents approximately 23,000 electorate. The JPG has authority to act as directed by its member representatives and with the agreement of their respective parish councils.

The planning application for Waterside Park is not dissimilar to the proposals for the land at the KIG/AXA appeal [Appeal by Kent International Gateway Ltd Application REF: 07/2092. Decision issued by Julian Pitt Department for Communities and Local Government 5 August 2010].

The JPG objects to all the current site specific proposals adjacent to Junction 8 of the M.20.

We have previously stated our concerns for the protection of the area adjacent to the Thurnham Aquifer and for the protection of the River Len and the Mill stream. We have made extensive and reasoned argument to the Water Inquiry for the protection of the Aquifer with adjacent water re-use and storage to provide Aquifer re-charge.

This application for development around Junction 8 can be resisted by using the arguments of inspector Andrew Phillipson in rejecting the KIG proposal. After a public enquiry lasting some 3 months Mr. Phillipson had no hesitation in finding the area to be important in the setting of the AONB.

The former Deputy Chief Executive of Maidstone Borough Council, Trevor Gasson, rejected an earlier application [when opposing a football stadium and supposed “high tech” development on land in that area in July 1995] stating that development would lead to piecemeal and totally uncontrolled development south of the M20. He then recommended “Rejection of Woodcut Farm as a potential employment allocation”.

### **Traffic**

The proposed development when fully operational will generate increased vehicle movements on to a section of road that has a history of road accidents. It will have an adverse impact on the local road network, in particular the A20/M20 Link Roundabout Junction. There is evidence of growing congestion for traffic exiting Maidstone via Junction 8 where traffic backs up at the A20 roundabout near to the Mercure, Great Danes Hotel. This is likely to increase significantly as a result of additional traffic exiting the M20 at Junction 8 and heading for the application site.

Maidstone and its surrounding area already suffer extensively from traffic congestion. In the event of a motorway accident/closure, the area becomes grid locked in a very short time. This is likely to be exacerbated by traffic generated by the application proposals both during the construction stage and when it becomes operational. The M20 is already subject to frequent traffic congestion, particularly during periods when ‘Operation Stack’ is in place. Any congestion at Junction 8 will invariably result in local traffic exiting or entering the motorway at other Junctions such as 6 and 7 and thereby adding to local traffic congestion and its associated problems, such as noise and air pollution. The area around Grove Green, including New Cut is particularly affected during such times, which often results in a grid lock situation. Similarly, congestion on the M20 often results in traffic diverting to the M2 using various routes including country lanes as well as Blue Bell Hill in order to traverse the North Downs and gain access to the M2.

The application offers nothing of benefit to the people living in the surrounding parishes or indeed Maidstone as a whole. It will only result in increased noise, pollution, traffic congestion on roads that are reaching saturation point and the desecration of the rural environment. The proposed location of this development is entirely inappropriate and to allow it to proceed, would be a disservice to the local communities that surround the site and the wider County of Kent as a whole.

### **Landscape**

The proposed development is of an alien nature and form that will change completely the character of the site and surrounding area. It will involve the loss of natural landscape features such as hedgerows, trees and areas of woodland. These all make a valuable contribution to the rural setting of the area.

Given the rural nature of the site and surrounding area, together with the scale and volume of the development, the proposed landscape mitigation works will do little to offset the harm caused to the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area. Indeed, if the application were to be approved, we believe that it would lead to piecemeal development along this rural corridor, further eroding its character and landscape setting, whilst also exacerbating matters such as traffic generation, air pollution and noise.

### **Cultural Heritage**

It is considered that the application proposals will have an adverse impact on the cultural heritage of the site and surrounding area. This area is likely to suffer from increased traffic congestion. These factors will combine to change the character of the area and have an adverse impact on the Conservation Area.

Leeds Castle an important national and international historic monument is likely to be affected by the application proposals. Its present setting, whilst far from perfect, benefits from a rural approach. The destruction of the landscape around Junction 8, together with the increased traffic congestion will seriously detract from the setting of this monument and as a visitor attraction in its own right.

### **Air Quality**

Increases in dust transmission and air pollution will result from the proposed development. Dust pollution is likely to be particularly acute during the construction stage arising from the remodeling of the ground to create the building platforms and during the removal of surplus soil from the site. Air Pollution from construction traffic is also likely to be an issue during this stage. Once operational, additional pollution will be caused by the increased HGV movements, together with cars of employees and service vehicles/visitors.

### **Conclusion**

The application proposals by virtue of their size and scale together with the nature of their operations will introduce an alien form of development to a rural setting completely destroying its character and social function.

The proposals will have a devastating impact on the local landscape including the setting of the North Downs ANOB. Other adverse impacts will be in terms of air quality, noise, wildlife and ecology together with traffic generation, both locally and within the wider area.

The Joint Parish Group is concerned that MBC will allow such an application for a green field site to be submitted and considered ahead of the completion of the Local Development Framework. We feel that if this application is allowed, this will set precedence and will result in an influx of similar applications for this and other areas within rural Maidstone. Having regard to the forgoing, the Joint Parishes Group objects to these proposals and respectfully requests Members refuse this application.

Yours sincerely

*S Babington*

Mrs S Babington  
Clerk to the Joint Parish Group