

MOJO Meeting – 27th July 2020

Microsoft teams Meeting – hosted by Cllr Paul Bartlett (ABC), invitees – Mersham Parish Council, Sevington with Finberry Parish Council, Damian Green MP, County Cllr Clair Bell (KCC), Linda Arthur (Village Alliance) and Christine Drury (CPRE)

In attendance:

Cllr Bartlett (ABC), Damian Green MP, Linda Arthur (Village Alliance), Stewart Ross, Peter Hawkins, Peter Turley, Rick Martin, Christine Drury (CPRE), Jan Oakley-Hills, Melanie Wells, Kenton Stewart, Clair Bell (KCC), Geoffrey Fletcher, James Townsend and Tracey Block.

Paul introduced the meeting

Peter Turley circulated the questions from Mersham Parish Council re MOJO site discussion

1) What is the precise extent of the site purchased?

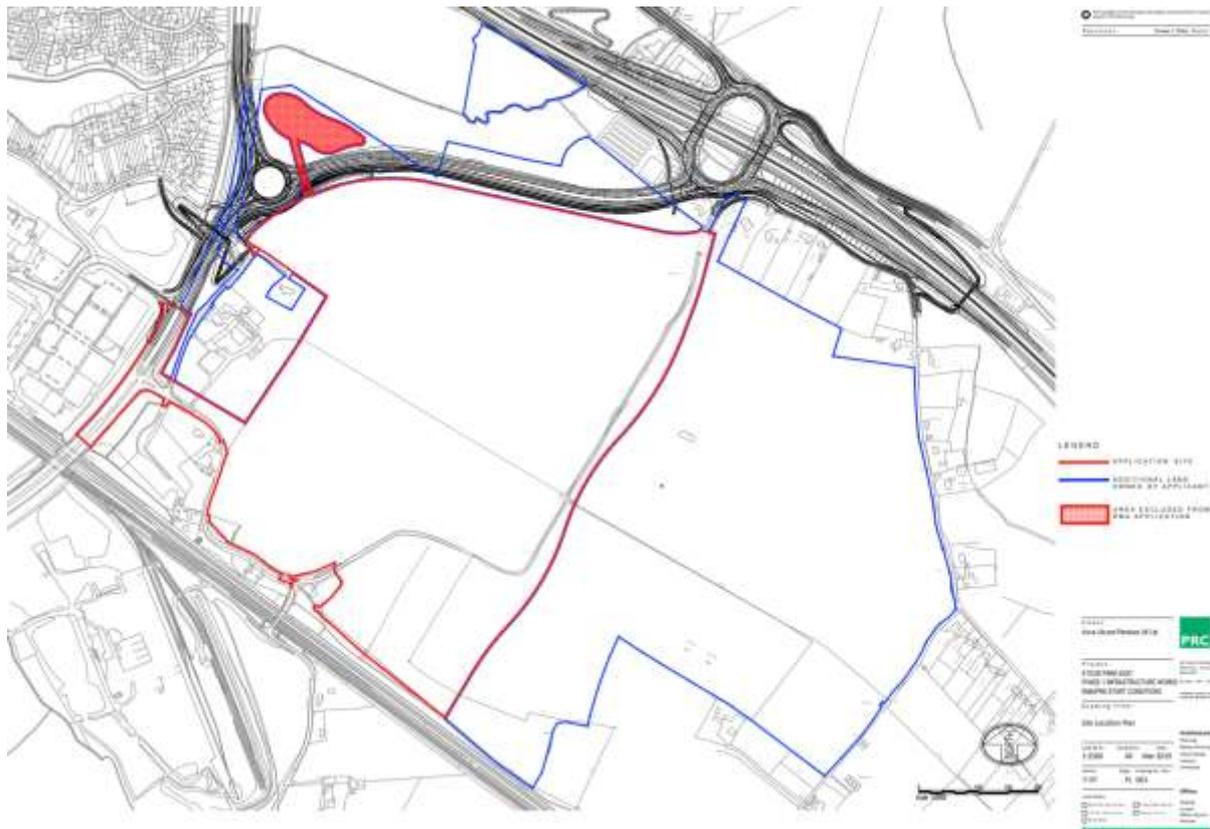
- The DfT letter of 15 July 2020 referred to the MOJO site in Sevington but the attached map showed clear incursion into Mersham. (Land east of Highfield Lane)
- The letter also states, “Our intention is only to make use for these purposes of the western part of the site, which has previously been granted planning permission for commercial development”. This implies that the site purchased extends to the east.
- Development beyond Highfield Lane would be a major concern, going against the “Separation of Settlements” policy of ABC which was put in place to maintain the village nature of Ashford Borough villages such as Mersham.
- What assurance can we have that east of Highfield lane will not be developed?

Area in Mersham



- 2) What is the planned usage of the site?
- The DfT letter of 15 July 2020 stated, “we envisage two primary uses” and “the site may also be used as a contingency lorry holding area”.
 - The level of local impact and as such the level of concern and objection is fundamentally related to the intended use of the site. The ambiguous information provided to date is not sufficient.
 - Key information we request includes
 - i. What is the site design and layout?
 - ii. What are the usage plans/design parameters for the site?
 - Lorry capacity, traffic volumes, HMRC and service buildings, car parking,
 - Operating hours
 - What provisions are being made to mitigate lorry emissions, flood water, light and noise pollution and other environmental concerns?
 - With respect to emissions, electric plug-ins for all lorries onsite should be mandated to allow engines to be switched off.
 - What offsite queuing facilities are planned to mitigate against inappropriate lorry parking in the neighbouring areas which would impact residents, other businesses and of course access to the William Harvey hospital?
 - What plans / investments are being made to mitigate the risk of errant vehicles using the narrow roads through adjacent villages?
- 3) If this is not a lorry park what are the plans for lorry parking in Kent.
- If no credible solution exists, then this site and neighbouring areas will degrade to a lorry park by default.
- 4) What is the programme plan for the site?
- What are the key programme milestones and dates?
 - What is the extent of the work already started?
 - What is planned in terms of public communication and CONSULTATION?
 - Will community investment (Section 106) money for Sevington be honoured and additional community investment be added for Mersham
 - Will local property owners be compensated for the disruption and reduction in property values?

Paul Bartlett responded to Pete’s question as best as possible in the first instance PB showed a map as below. There is a small incursion in to Mersham.



Toby Howe at KCC has confirmed that the whole site has been purchased (ie red plus blue edged site above) but cannot use the Eastern part of the site as this is not part of the Borough Plan. East of Highfield Lane development is not part of the core strategy then cannot be included.

PB showed plan of site, illustrative use of site below showing layout for AXA development, **could** illustrate the layout of parking. The site is a Border Readiness HMRC Clearance Post with facility to temporarily hold up to 2,000 lorries for the first few months of Brexit. From 1 July 2021 it will also be a DEFRA site for sanitary and phytosanitary products (food).

Access will only be via J10A and traffic using unauthorised routes will be prevented from doing so by legislation and enforcement with fines.



Smart Freight System – as explained by Paul, will be an electronic system that summons the freight lorry to appear at the site.

No ideas yet what the site design and layout is

The site will have strict operating criteria

5 additional sites being looked into in Kent – Ebbsfleet, Waterbrook, TAP (A256), Dover docks and Operation Brock. Up to 2000 lorries could use this site if there is an issue with Operation Brock. There will be a zip barrier in operation on the M20.

The Site Development Order (SDO) will be passed by Parliament in September – have suggested that there will be some period of “consultation.” This will deal with flooding etc. Will certainly ensure that all S106 monies will receive the funding previously agreed. The SDO money will be given to KCC. Should be able to be involved in this at the time of consultation. Should have legacy funding – this site was supposed to deliver jobs, pleasing thing is that this might kill off the plan for Ashford’s Great Park.

Damian Green MP – thanked Paul

Putting this in perspective, the Government sees this site as an insurance, this is to enable the border to keep flowing so the use of the new app will mean the correct papers are held prior to the lorry turning up at the Port – there may be an issue when things settle down in January – max. Lorries at any time is 8,500 lorries – Dover TAP system will hold 2,000 lorries as will Operation Brock. Brock keeps the M20 running so the motorway is not closed completely. They will be using concrete barriers which are easier and quicker to operate. All of the concrete required is now in Suffolk but will be available by end of 2020. 2,000 lorries can be put on MOJO site.

Manston was assumed to be unavailable but there is now a possibility that Manston development may be delayed so that site might be available. This could take many 1000’s of lorries.

In answer to question 2, Damian explained that he has a promise that this is NOT a lorry park from Government in writing.

Having seen the questions, Damian Green has sent them on to the Minister, Rachel Maclean herself to see whether there is a difference between her responses and Pauls knowledge.

Clair Bell

Lots of uncertainty.

KCC have also sent the questions on to the Department for Transport.

Not trying to create a lorry park, this is just a worst case scenario so will only be used if the M20 cannot be kept flowing otherwise.

Paul Bartlett in response to questions raised

Need to see the detail in the SDO and Operational Plan

When Waterbrook was applied for these were mentioned, these were not shared.

Will Highfield Lane be kept as a by-way – PB YES!

Will plug ins be provided – YES!

Residents will of course be able to provide their comments/concerns. PB speaking to someone at the DfT – to see how issues can be raised by the public.

CHRISTINE DRURY (CPRE)

The existing SDO is in place for Manston – pleased that this stays in place. The other is in place for Waterbrook – there are parallel, lorries need to stop for a number of hours and they do that using lorry parks like Stop 24 and Waterbrook. Existing Waterbrook does not have plug ins but does have capacity and is being used as the 650 spaces are not being made available as Government are holding on to them and could be used for those in MOJO sites but need to rest. Government using SDOs will stop the lorry spaces being able to be used.

DAMIAN GREEN – Christine raises a good point. If Government put the SDO off then that would release 650 places?

Only using 660 places and not using 950 that would be available as they are using the SDO. Could they use the new site as it has plug ins, is it further away from the services?

CHRISTINE DRURY

No, this is an operational site. This is all shut up and is ready to be used but this raises a question of how do we bring local knowledge to the plan – need clarity from DfT for how to engage with stake holders to make sure our message is fed back to DfT.

PETE TURLEY – you mentioned the decision is targeted for September – we do not have the detail and think there might be negligible time available for consultation/input?

PAUL BARTLETT - We need detail of procedures and how they will be put in place. Think that lorries will not come off at J.9 but need to know about the detail – lighting, legacy funding and how that will be managed, the entrance and layout – the footpath across the site – expect that to be diverted but there has to be a discussion how they might be operated and how Highfield Lane might be configured. PB showed the original site plan – the footpath meant the warehouse had to be split in 2. If we can see a plan – we could see what Highfield Lane will look like post re-conguration. How will the layout work and need a way of laying these questions to ensure they go to the correct person at the DfT.

DAMIAN GREEN – the devil will be in the detail – will ask for details, the operator plan will be under KCC who are playing a significant plan so PB/CB should have access to this easier.

CLAIR BELL – going back to Christine’s point – I understood that Waterbrook may still be used by HM Customs so that might be why they are holding on to Waterbrook’s SDO. Customs is in 2 sets – Imports and Exports may be undertaken in 2 separate locations.

GEOFFREY FLETCHER – can the SDO overthrow the Local Authority Plan?

PAUL BARTLETT - KCC have said no plans to use the Eastern side of the site. DG, have you heard anything? Only that there is no plan to use that, Rachel Maclean, said, “Government only mean to use the Western part.”

In fairness to Officers, we need to put points across very clearly and need someone to be architect of questions.

TB to make a list – starting point being in Pete’s document but there are additional questions and legal nicety of whether the SDO can over-throw the Local Plan?

PB to add to PTs questions, ABC Local Plan 2030, even if a site was not in the plan means it can be developed. What steps can we take to give us confidence of protection of the Eastern Site – PB to take this up with ABC.

GEOFFREY FLETCHER – If it is the Govt intention to put 2000 lorries on the site, with no buildings – with facilities, you would need to reduce the amount of lorries. Think we are vulnerable to the need to put additional lorries on this site.

CHRISTINE DRURY – When we see the outline plan for the site, whether there are buildings etc. there could be a 25% building cover – detail will show up how many lorries they need. If Waterbrook is also being used, what will happen to the rest of Ashford if the lorry drivers have run out of driver hours.

PAUL BARTLETT – reflecting on list of questions – should wait for opportunity to respond, there will be follow up questions and PB will act as ring-master. PB to find out timetable for opportunity to make their views known. There needs to be some formality to the way comments are dealt with.

CLAIR BELL – so many detailed questions, it would be very valuable if someone from DfT could attend a meeting to go through the questions. Do not think this is too much to ask. Maybe KCC would also attend.

PAUL BARTLETT – I will try and arrange something, hope to have something in place.

STEWART ROSS – historically government has been very poor at developing IT systems, have concerns it might not be ready by January.

DAMIAN GREEN – at the meter testing stage and should be operational by November – it is not that complex but the difficulty is making sure every lorry driver has it and will every

lorry driver have it? If people get it wrong and go through the border without papers, it will be so difficult that they will not try it again. The issues will mean emergency measures will need to be brought in.

STEWART ROSS – will the app have full language versions?

DAMIAN GREEN – yes, this will be the case.

PETE TURLEY – do we know anything further about capacity. Is there any information about the flow from/to the site.

DAMIAN GREEN – reckon 8,500 lorries travel across the channel each day – so flow is dependant of the number of lorries using TAP and Brock. There are 2 emergency systems first and this is the 3rd emergency site. KCC will be in charge of these emergency measures. If 8,500 lorries a day – the ideal would be 170 lorries per day.

RICK MARTIN – The disruption is inevitable, contribution to the Church – recompense to the local area?

DAMIAN GREEN – good point but nothing available as yet – detail will be brought out through the SDO. Similar compensation element to that of a S106.

PAUL BARTLETT – I spoke to Tracey Kerley at ABC – sum received that we can expect majority to be spent in Ashford. KCC are likely to want it to relate to transport/cycling and walking initiatives. PB encouraged ABC to discuss this with Parishes etc. May not be Parish specific.

PB to arrange a session with Officers present – DG and CB to send availability for a meeting. PB will make sure that others available.

Thanks to all for giving their time.

Meeting closed at 6.00 pm.