

## Town Meeting held in Churchill School 13 October 2015

(Co- sponsored by Westerham Town Council, Westerham Town Partnership, Westerham Residents Association and the Westerham Society.)

Speakers were:

Helen Ogden, Vice Chair Westerham Town Council  
Jane Hunter, Westerham Town Partnership  
Peter Cashmore, Westerham Residents Association  
Gordon Rodgers, Westerham Society

Cllr Richard Parry, KCC  
Cllr Diana Esler, SDC  
Cllr Kevin Maskell, SDC

### Details of the application

The details of the Planning application made by Roxhill were presented, and the size and potential operation of the site as a distribution depot explained. It was noted that Roxhill specialised in developing sites for the distribution and retailing industries, clients being Amazon, Hermes, DHL as well as the potential occupier of the first site, Geopost/DPD.

### Meeting with Roxhill

A meeting between the sponsoring organisations and Roxhill had been held, at which the developers view was that as this was a brownfield site, with industrial operations dating from before the introduction of Planning restrictions in 1947, it could be developed. In Roxhill's view a modern clean distribution centre was the best option for Westerham. Roxhill had not responded to queries on their application sent to them following that meeting.

### Need for action now

It was explained that although there might be longer-term solutions to alleviate the traffic through Westerham, it was imperative that objections to the current application be made **on Planning Grounds** before the current cut off date of **28 October**

**Planning Grounds** on which objections could be lodged were explained

#### 1. Increase in traffic movements (the major ground for objection)

- a. Roxhill's estimates were unreliable as they were based on only 2/3 of the collection/delivery vans for which the site provided parking spaces being operational.
- b. It was demonstrated that Roxhill's claims of vehicle movements leaving the site were unreliable. It was impossible, as they claimed, for 100 vans to leave the site between 7am and 9.30am if the maximum numbers leaving per hour was only 19. This also ignored the vehicles leaving the site at the end of the early morning shift.
- c. The additional HGV movements estimated would **all be at night** or in the very early morning. Roxhill stated that there would be 26 HGV movements per day. It was estimated that this would be closer to 40.
- d. Roxhill had estimated increase in vehicle movements over the historic figures generated by the Moorhouse site when working at full capacity. This ignored the general increase in traffic levels using the A25 since that time and therefore the setting in which it is operating..

- e. Should the complete site be let to other Roxhill distribution clients, and using the assumption, with which Roxhill had not disagreed, then the traffic on the A25 would increase by 24% over a Government census figure of 9286 movements a day, and HGV traffic would increase by 465% over a base of 34 noted in Roxhill's own traffic survey.
- f. While it was acknowledged that not all the increased traffic would come via Westerham, there were some impacts which would be peculiar to the town:
  - i. Increased noise, air and light pollution
  - ii. Westerham's 'pinch points' are currently below the specified width for two way traffic, and have to be used effectively as 'one-way' working by HGVs.
  - iii. Sharp bends and difficult junctions, not built to deal with current traffic levels
  - iv. Narrow pavements make for dangerous conditions for pedestrians/cyclists
  - v. Effect on the town of the closure of the M25 following any incident
  - vi. Impact on the setting of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and on the Economic Development of the town, which is planned on the café culture, & heritage trails alongside the road.

## 2. Air Quality

Westerham is already a air pollution black spot, with levels of pollution in Market Square in particular being 25% above EU recommended nad UK legal limits.

There has been some progress in reducing pollution over the last year. The increase in traffic, which this development would bring, can only halt this improvement and make pollution worse.

## 3. Impact on Westerham's Heritage and Listed Buildings

The Westerham Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (2014) emphasises the need for developments to blend with the existing environment and **the routes through and around it**, and for traffic engineers to work with Local authority planners and conservation officers to ensure this.

The physical damage caused to Westerham's buildings by large vehicles is already evident, and pollution from higher levels of traffic can only increase the chemical damage to the fabric of the town.

## 4. Job creation

It is unlikely that jobs created by this development will significantly benefit either Tandridge or Sevenoaks Districts:

- a. It is distribution industry practice to source at least 50% Collection/Delivery drivers (majority of the jobs created) from existing owner/drivers of such vans.
- b. The remainder would be sourced from already qualified drivers – the majority of whom are, according to Roxhill's application – to be found from Crawley, East Grinstead and Croydon
- c. Warehouse operatives (32?) are required to work early morning and/or late evening shifts and would have to depend on their own transport to get to work Although Roxhil have submitted a Travel Plan as part of their application, it is

unlikely that efforts to reduce travel to work journeys by car would have much impact.

5. **District and County Councillors views**

It was confirmed that Kent Highways was, in conjunction with Surrey Highways, investigating the Traffic forecasts and would be responding to the application.

**It was emphasised that Planning law requires applications to be considered on the basis of the information provided, and that speculation on what might happen in future could not be taken into consideration.**

It was suggested that objectors should consider whether a planning condition restricting the use of the remainder of the site to non-distribution activity, or otherwise restricting future traffic growth should form part of their objection.

Both District and County Councillors assured the meeting of their support to the town. District Councillors would focus on the environmental and heritage issues, the County Councillor on the traffic and Highways issues. Both would be speaking to their Planning Departments

6. **Residents views**

Throughout the evening residents raised views, comments and queries. These focused on traffic, environmental and heritage issues. Where the issues raised had not already been considered by the four sponsoring organisations, they were noted and would be followed up when and wherever possible.

7. **Action**

All were encouraged to register objections with Tandridge District Council.  
via the website:

<http://tdcws01.tandridge.gov.uk/TDCPlanningComments/PlanningCommentsForm.htm>

via email to: [cparker@tandridge.gov.uk](mailto:cparker@tandridge.gov.uk)

or by post to: Charlotte Parker, Planning Team Manager, Tandridge District Council, 8 Station Road East, Oxted RH8 0BT

**By 28 October**

8. Further information would be published on:

Westerham Town Council website and Facebook page

Visitwesterham website and Westerham Kent Facebook page

@visit\_westerham

@ westerhambiz

As soon as it is available

