

## **Moorhouse Tile Works Planning Application – Objection Application 2015/1217**

This further submission is provided after additional research allowed by the deferral of the application hearing.

Westerham Town Council wishes to register its objection to the application under four headings:

1. Unacceptable increase in traffic onto the A25
2. Unacceptable damage to the Environment of the AONB and Heritage assets in Westerham Town
3. Unacceptable increase in airborne pollutants from increased vehicle movements.
4. Unrealistic job creation figures

1) There is a statutory requirement that the transport assessment provided by the applicant is reviewed and commented upon by Surrey Highways, however we cannot see any such report with the application documents. This is a requirement *under section 5.4 of the Local plan- "Surrey CC should provide technical advice and comments on planning applications specifically involving highways safety which should be used to assist applicants prior to submitting an application"*.

Further we do not believe there has been any consultation by Surrey with Kent Highways who are directly impacted by this development and whose comments should have been sought.

We have recently been advised that the applicant has been given a further opportunity to revise its transport plan in consultation with Surrey CC. We find this very disappointing as it gives consultees no time for additional investigation of the new report.

Our own research into the distribution methodology and recent parcel delivery growth at DPD/Geopost is part of this objection. This is in order to correctly relate vehicle numbers to traffic movements and make comparisons with the consultant's statistics.

At the same time it is important to recognise the very large numbers of vehicles that comprise the three categories of HGV, delivery vans and employee/visitor transport that this site is designed to support and the substantial growth potential in parcels that can be handled as evidenced in the recent corporate announcements from DPD regarding other sites.

Dartford DPD has increased parcel throughput from 2,000 to 8,000 per day allowing it to take 50 new routes, all without increase in space occupied but inevitably with a meaningful increase in vehicle movements.

Moorhouse will be twice the size of Dartford.

The Moorhouse site plan allows for the efficient parking and movement of 151 delivery vans, 104 cars, 19 HGVs plus 12 HGVs in the unloading docks. DPD will deliver parcels in bulk to Moorhouse overnight via HGV and then deliver/collect individual parcels via van during the daytime. Some vans are owner driven, about 50%, others will generate extra traffic from the private vehicles of the directly employed drivers as there is no public transport option available.

The comparator site that has been identified for traffic generation information is DPD Bournemouth. This location is less than ¼ the size of Moorhouse. This comparison explains the seriously misleading and unrealistically low figures offered by the transport consultants, e.g. only 19 delivery vans are projected to leave Moorhouse between 8-9 am.

Bournemouth is the smallest DPD site in their network with only 2 loading/unloading bays, 40 vans and no dedicated parking for either vans or HGVs. It is scheduled for replacement.

#### Objections.

1. Traffic projections are based upon substantially understated and thereby misleading comparisons.

2. The traffic projections should be based upon full utilisation of the parking/unloading spaces in unit 1.

Initial over provision is not without a purpose, that purpose must be future growth.

On this basis the traffic consultant's estimate of delivery vans for unit 1 joining the A25 between 08.00 and 09.00 increases from 19 to 112.

Allowing for the full utilisation of vehicles in unit 1 creates a daily overall 8% increase in traffic onto the A25 and 12% using the Roxhill traffic survey of 943 movements between 08.00 and 09.00. Traffic from the rest of the B8 site for the three remaining units using the consultants TRIC data warrants a further 3% increase **but similar distribution use by the other 3 units results in a peak hour increase of 44%.**

**The resultant traffic increase from unit 1 is therefore severe in the context of NPPF para 32** when focusing these volume into either daily or peak time occurrences and massively so should 4 parcel distribution be built.

3. DPD now operate the new "ParcelLock" system. This offers other distribution companies and supermarkets the ability to store and distribute goods at DPD sites using own transport. The transport analysis takes no account of such extra traffic.
4. The size of the Moorhouse unit indicates its future will be as a transport hub location or "supersite" rather than a depot. This increases its HGV movement profile as it will both receive and make bulk parcel deliveries. The consultant's figures are based upon depot status.
5. Overnight HGV traffic is offered as a benefit. There is a Government 5 year statistical average of 9,286 traffic movements per day through Westerham. Night time provides respite, particularly from HGVs. This

respite diminishes under the DPD proposals as the percentage night time growth in HGV traffic is substantial.

6. The A25 through Westerham is unsuited to HGV traffic and increasing volumes generally due to three main factors.
  - Pinch points reflect the Town's heritage with listed buildings narrowing the available carriageway in three places.
  - The Town has more than 100 listed buildings with the majority on the A25 including the Grade 1 National Trust's Quebec House, former home of General Wolfe.
  - The width available at these points places the A25 in Government's road classification as no more than a Residential Street, i.e. maximum of 5.5 metres wide.  
At the Croydon Road junction the A25 narrows to 4.8 metres and at Vicarage Hill to 4.78 metres.

*Policy-*

*DP5 requires that traffic does not unnecessarily impede the free flow of traffic on the existing network or create hazards to that traffic and other road users.*

**We believe the application fails under this policy due to the severe increase in volume created.**

2) The proposed new buildings will have an unacceptable impact on the Surrey Hills AONB and impact on the visual quality of the AONB in Westerham Parish due to the size, materials to be used and design of the sheds. The development in our opinion does not respect the setting of the AONB and its place in the living landscape of the area.

Westerham Town straddles the A25, the historical East to West highway, now already choked with heavy vehicles the size and weight of which are damaging the many listed buildings and heritage assets in the Town. The road through the Town has two points where the highway width is almost half that now required of a major road and large commercial vehicles are unable to pass causing heavy congestion, even without the impact of any disruption to the M25. At each of these pinch points are listed buildings of significant historic value including a Grade 1 listed National Trust property.

Westerham, as a focus for tourism and recreation in the countryside for people living in London, is already under severe threat from the volume of traffic passing through the town centre and its very economic and social viability will be further undermined by this development.

Your own policy DP2 (B) recognises this in terms of Oxted but we would argue that you have a wider responsibility to other Town centres affected by this development.

*Policy-*

*DP4. (1) "The site is unsuitably located, for example because of inadequate access for heavy goods vehicles or the harm to the amenities of nearby residential property by reason of traffic, noise or general disturbance..."*

*DP10 (B) "A new development would be harmful to the Greenbelt by virtue of its size and bulk"*

*13.1- this restricts any increase in commercial building of disproportionate size by its external volume.*

*DP8 of the Surrey Hills AONB states- "Proposals that would have a negative impact upon views into and out of the AONB and which do not respect the setting will not be acceptable." The Surrey Hills AONB acknowledge the wider values and views of the AONB as a living landscape"*

**We believe the application fails under these policies.**

3) Westerham Town is registered as an AQMA under EU legislation and in 2014 air quality was 25% above the maximum levels set for atmospheric pollutants. Latest readings taken show NO<sub>2</sub> readings of **55.8** (ug/m<sup>3</sup>) against a target of **40**.

The UK has a National Air Quality Strategy whereby it seeks to comply with EEC directives and a duty imposed by the Secretary of State *under Air Quality limit Value regulations. (S.1. 2003/2121)*

A regulation shall have a general application and is binding in its entirety on all member states. The EU directive under which this is governed is 2008/50/EC whose objective is to control and reduce atmospheric pollution and which is designed therefore to protect public health.

Planning Authorities have a duty, through their decision making, to prevent or reduce breaches of EU law including the Air Quality Directive. This duty is reinforced through *the NPPF policies, which state " ...contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution"*

*In addition PPG 15 states " Concerns could arise if the development is likely to generate Air Quality impact in an area where air quality is known to be poor...lead to a breach of EU legislation."*

Planning Authorities have a statutory obligation to make decisions taking into account Development Plans as well as National Planning Policy. Under these there is a need to take into account any other material considerations *(s.70 Town and Country Planning Act 1990)*

The potential for a development to cause ill effects off site such as traffic congestion and pollution is accepted as being a material consideration and should be referred to the Environment Agency. This does not however enable the relevant planning authority to abdicate responsibility for its decision in considering a planning application.

Planning Authorities must try and prevent developments from worsening air quality and achieve best air quality to justify the principal of “sustainable development”.

**We believe the application fails under this EU Law and UK planning policy on air quality.**

In addition we are advised that granting permission would be illegal under current EU law requiring the Authority to refrain from any action that would prejudice fulfillment of EU law obligations. Failure to follow this principle could lay Tandridge District Council open to civil action or Judicial Review.

4) The planning application states that circa 150 jobs will be created for the operation of Unit 1, plus an unspecified number of temporary jobs during construction.

(A recent Sevenoaks Chronicle press announcement from the applicant refers to 300 jobs without clarification or justification.)

Appendix J of the Transport Assessment, Part 3, indicates that these jobs will comprise 100 collection/delivery drivers, 32 warehouse staff and 17 office staff. Leaving aside the misalignment between driver numbers and vehicle spaces, the nature of the jobs and the employment practices in the distribution industry mean that whatever the number of jobs the economic benefit to the local area will be small because;

a). Our research into the employment policies and practices of distribution depots, together with scrutiny of current DPD job adverts, indicates that some 50% of collection/delivery drivers are owner drivers, i.e. self employed individuals who sub contract their services and vehicles to the distribution company.

The same sources also reveal that any directly employed drivers are required to be pre qualified and with relevant previous experience.

b). The application reviews the supply of those already employed in the warehousing and distribution industry and using 2011 Census figures the majority of these are resident either in the Crawley/East Grinstead or Croydon areas thus giving a high likelihood that potential employees would not be drawn from the Tandridge area.

This view is supported by the pre application comment from both Surrey and Kent Highways....”*the site is likely to be employing people from much farther afield than the immediate area*”.

c). In addition to providing little or no local job benefit, the development would not support Tandridge’s stated target of reducing journeys to work by 10%. The Travel Plan submitted is both unrealistic and unachievable, a view supported by both Surrey and Kent Highways pre application comments... “*The Travel Plan would have limited effect since employees would travel from further afield than just nearby Oxted and Westerham.*”

All staff and especially those employed in the warehouse would need to travel at times when public transport is not available.

Cycling along the A25 with its intermittent cycle provision and acknowledged safety issues is a highly unlikely outcome and car sharing is dependent upon coinciding home locations and shift patterns.

The application assumes a "worst case scenario of 80% of journeys to work being by car.

This is a misleading underestimate, the actual proportion being much closer to 100% which in turn increases peak time traffic numbers along the A25.

Westerham Town Council

19<sup>th</sup> November 2015