

## **INTRODUCTION**

I am Bob Gomes (F R Gomes). I hold an honours degree in Zoology from the University of London and I am a local resident living in Graveney.

I have spent my the whole of my working career since 1976 in conservation, primarily relating to birds and the management of nature reserves

I have extensive experience as a field ornithologist and in the conservation of wetland habitats. During a long career with RSPB, I worked on a number of wetland and estuarine sites, including Leighton Moss, Lancashire, Havergate Island, Suffolk, Minsmere, Suffolk, Langstone Harbour, Hampshire, Dee Estuary, Cheshire and Elmley Marshes and Dungeness, Kent.

During my time at RSPB Elmley Nature Reserve from 1983 to 2003 in addition to my reserve duties, I took part in and was the local organiser for the high tide WeBS counts and low tide counts on the Swale. I also took part in and co-ordinated a team of volunteers in an intensive monitoring of marsh harriers during the period when they were establishing a breeding population on Sheppey. In 1997 this amounted to 230 + hours of staff and volunteer time.

## **SCOPE OF MY SUBMISSION**

As a local resident I am concerned about the impact on the village from the increase in heavy vehicle traffic on the local road system and disruption to the everyday life of the village. Other than mention this here, I will not include my concerns in my submission because others, expert in this subject, will produce detailed evidence.

I do have serious concerns that the solar park will adversely farmland bird and impact species of conservation concern that occur within the development site. Many of these are features of the adjacent designated sites: the special protection area **SPA**, the Ramsar site **RAMSAR**, site of special scientific interest **SSSI** and I therefore understand that they receive a high level of protection from damaging development which risks adversely affecting them. As others are presenting submissions on these issues, I do not intend to cover them in my submission.

In my submission I will describe the breeding and winter requirements of marsh harriers and the hunting and roosting behaviour of other harrier species in the local area and the likely, adverse effect of the solar park development.

I will also comment on the management of the mitigation area, specifically in relation to Brent Geese and wintering waders and proposed management options.

I also comment on the seed mix options described in the Habitat Management Plan that in my opinion are inappropriate in the context of the North Kent grazing marsh landscape