



COWFOLDVRAMPION CLOSING STATEMENT

Cowfold Residents' Comments at Deadline 6

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Introduction:

Part of the point of the consultation process is to ensure the least environmentally damaging, most appropriate location is chosen. The examination has shown that when a site has been chosen to take the path of least resistance, as in this instance, it has resulted in the retrofitting of actions and designs to deal with the issues they uncovered at a later date. We have a duty as a nation to be as gentle as possible on our environment and not simply to take the option preferred by the applicant for reasons of profit or self-interest.

It is inevitable that in a project of this scale, some environmental damage will occur, but in the national interest this must be minimised. An appropriate site must be chosen which maximises the efficiency (ie is actually suitably windy) and minimises harm (by location not just of the windfarm itself, but also the main connection to the grid, via the cable route and new substation location).

For the substation, the failure to properly evaluate the site either by consultation or survey before choosing it has led to a succession of increasingly damaging environmental decisions in order to compensate for the problems they have since uncovered.

Consultation

There is a duty to consider all responses; this must include a *lack* of response. Due diligence in a properly conducted survey should have triggered an investigation into the lack of response from the Cowfold area and would have revealed the failure to send appropriate leaflets and section 42 letters. In our Local Impact Statement and Adequacy of Consultation submissions we detailed the extensive evidence about the lack of consultation with the Cowfold area and how the whole consultation was, in the early stages, skewed towards a presumption of a substation closer to the main substation by the language used and graphics sent out, even when residents *did* receive them leaflets.

The answers by Rampion during both the Consultation and the Examination have been designed not to inform but to conceal.

Their documents are written in such a way as to appear to be reasonable but deeper investigation shows that they do not back up claims with data. At the recent hearings the WSCC highways representative said, to the astonishment of all present, that the Kent Street and A272 traffic management plans “appeared at first sight to be workable”. The deeper reading clearly done by the Examining Authority rapidly revealed numerous holes in the plan and showed just how badly thought out it was. This was also mirrored in the proposals for Michelgrove and Tolmare Farm on the SDNP where they apparently thought it reasonable to put a new metalled road with passing places and turning circle through the Downs, where previously only a bridleway had existed. They had also not considered (or admitted?) that it ran along the site of an important archaeological site and might damage the iron age fort and roman remains.

Consideration of Alternatives:

We believe we have demonstrated that the evidence is overwhelming, with regard to the substation site and northern cable route at least, that by failing to consult properly with the population of Cowfold, they have not properly considered the alternatives to genuinely identify the most suitable option. Rather, they have openly stated that they have chosen the ‘path of least resistance’ in ‘choosing’ the substation location because they had no objections from this area, as nobody was aware until after the substation site was chosen. They have then had to ‘retrofit’ the reasons to justify this. In reality, they have dug themselves into ever deeper environmental holes with regards to traffic, ecology, access etc because they had not consulted at the appropriate time, and were therefore unaware of key facts until too late.

Paragraph 4.2.22 of EN-1 2023 “The Secretary of State should be guided in considering alternative proposals by whether there is a realistic prospect of the alternative delivering the same infrastructure capacity (including energy security, climate change, and other environmental benefits) **in the same timescale as the proposed development.**”

The alternative sites at Wineham could deliver this in the same or even less time.

The 2024 NPS EN-5 states that:

*2.2.8 There will usually be a degree of flexibility in the location of the development’s associated substations, and applicants **should consider carefully their location, as well as their design.***

*2.2.9 In particular, the applicant should consider **such characteristics as the local topography, the possibilities for screening of the infrastructure and/or other options to mitigate any impacts.***

They did not do this, due to inadequate consultation/engagement prior to submission. They did not consider this until almost the end of the examination process, and now it is clear, the opportunities for screening are very limited, they have chosen a site which floods and the constraints of the site limit mitigations.

In consideration of alternatives and perceived benefits of access directly off the A272, they didn’t take into account *at all* the access to the haul road in the implications of choosing the site, because they did not properly consult. The truest comparison of access to the sites should be the acceptability or otherwise of using Kent Street v Wineham La and not Wineham Lane v the A272.

Many of the issues could be avoided if the substation were located at Wineham Lane North or South site, next to Rampion 1. There are only a handful of businesses in the local vicinity, and the traffic does not back up to Wineham Lane on the A272, making it unlikely to cause as much disruption to road users (as demonstrated during the construction of Rampion 1), and the biodiversity and heritage impacts will be far less.

They have chosen the site with, amongst others:

- The most biodiversity
- The greatest hedge and tree loss
- The greatest impact on businesses and the wider economy
- An underground high voltage cable
- The fastest road, with the worst accident rate and impact on air quality compared to Wineham Lane

- The greatest flood risk both to the site and to nearby properties and the risk of water loss to the Adur created by the open cable channels and upstream flooding at the substation site
- A location in the parkland of a grade 2 listed building
- Adjacent to a lake
- The greatest heritage significance and impact for both construction and operation
- 5km further away from the main substation

Even before considering many of these points, they apparently had only a ‘marginal preference’ for Oakendene over the Wineham lane sites.

More widely, it is clear that there are grave doubts about whether they have chosen wisely, and in the national interest the site of the windfarm itself or the cable route over the SDNP.

Due to the changes in the gulf stream, the wind power and direction has changed. Many of the Welsh valley turbines are now not as productive as they were when they were initially commissioned and so are now less economical. This may well happen along the south coast due to climate change as wind speeds reduce, whereas they are increasing to the north and east.¹

The SDNP is diminished both ecologically by the damage done by the cable route and haul road, and by loss of its landscape and setting, which is of course, a significant part of what the experience is when visiting the national park. The same is true for Oakendene, Cratemans and Kent Street, which although undesignated, are highly valued both locally, and by walkers and cyclists from the wider county, for the setting and landscape around them, which will also be irrevocably destroyed by the proposals.

Landowner Engagement:

On reading the representations submitted at each deadline, and listening to story after story at the Compulsory Acquisition hearings, it becomes ever more obvious that the Rampion consultation across the whole county has been poor, and that their engagement with landowners and affected parties is shameful. They do not seek to engage or negotiate; they do not provide data to support their claims and they are not willing to listen to reasonable alternatives put forward by landowners. Rampion say 60% of landowners have been involved in ongoing discussions, but this is just not true - the real picture is vastly different; what is being represented to the ExA does not tally with the real world. Most affected parties have not yet approved any draft agreement; only 15 parties have a heads of terms agreement in place, even though this is only a non-binding statement of intent.

This disconnect between Rampion’s and landowners’ views of the ‘ongoing discussions’ was ably laid out by several representatives at the acquisition hearings, one of whom said that “as a Lawyer who has worked on DCOs for 10 years he has never seen one with so many unresolved issues at this stage”

¹ The impact of climate change on the levelised cost of wind energy.
Daniel Hdidouan, Iain Staffell, Centre for Environmental Policy, Imperial College London, SW7 1NA, UK.

At OFHs and in Written Representations we hear repeated common themes of lack of engagement with landowners, poor consultation, riding roughshod over small farmers, overplaying of extent of discussion with Affected Parties.

The last minute splurge of 'information' regarding communication with landowners cannot compensate for three years of smoke and mirrors and lack of engagement.

Efforts to Acquire the Land Required for the Proposed Development by Negotiation:

Whatever the applicant may say at Deadline 6 to try to convince the ExA otherwise, it is overwhelmingly clear from the many angry submissions received during the Examination, that this has been handled very badly in deed.

Design and access:

The decision to choose this site on such a congested and dangerous section of road affecting so many people and having so many environmental consequences might have seemed like a good idea from a desk top map survey in lock down, but failure to consult with the local community has meant they have only understood the impacts retrospectively and have had to retrofit their reasons for 'choosing' it and alter proposals as each issue was brought to their attention.

The DCO submission and 'evidence' presented during the examination has been hallmarked by a lack of attention to detail and a continually changing plan with conflicting diagrams and statements, as they understand the impacts that should have been clear to them before they submitted the DCO in the first place. Increasing ecological and visual impacts, flooding, impacts to the Grade 2 listed manor house, the need to access the haul road by the highly inappropriate Kent Street, access impacts from the busy and dangerous stretch of the A272 and proximity to the congested AQMA of Cowfold, all mean the site is far more constrained and unsuitable than they first thought.

Ecological Impacts:

It is increasingly apparent now just how much tree, hedge and scrub destruction there will be in the small area around Oakendene with the loss of many important habitats, the significance of which are downplayed by Rampion; a common theme across the DCO. Natural England and others, even the French government, highlight the inadequacies of the applicant's ecological surveys more generally.

Their plans are chaotic and ill thought out. We learn now that as a result, there will be significant further loss of hedges and trees for vehicles to gain access to tiny Kent Street and to create passing places. They can no longer pretend that there can be any realistic screening of either Kent Street or the A272 from the industrial landscape that is the 12 acre substation.

With regards to the mitigation hierarchy, it is clear they have not followed the rules, which begin with first attempting to avoid, A clear alternative exists at Wineham Lane, capable of delivering the same results in a far less damaging way and in the same time frame or less.

The Industrial estate is very well hidden and low lying. The proposed substation site is in the parkland of Oakendene Manor and is a beautiful, tranquil site adjacent to a large lake. The fields, lake and stream support a precious ecosystem and the land from there to the A281 along the suggested cable route sustains a biodiversity similar to that at Knepp Castle. Nobody, quite rightly, would wish to

disturb the Knepp estate by such a project; there is no sound ecological reason to put it here either. Yet its very untouched nature is what makes this habitat so remarkable. Knepp castle is rightly praised for its rewilding project. This area does not need rewilding; it needs to be left alone.

The biodiversity from Oakendene to the A281 has been meticulously recorded over 18 years by Janine Creaye, a local artist working on biodiversity. Her records, which have been sent to you separately, and submitted to the biodiversity register, show an extraordinary range of species, including numerous badger setts, an important reptile habitat all around Cratemans farm and important nightingale breeding sites. Her reports, both written and photographic, submitted during the examination, have provided incontrovertible evidence that this is, ecologically (and in many other ways), the wrong place for this substation and its cable route. Rampion's over-reliance on desk top studies to inform the earlier parts of the consultation and decision was utterly inappropriate, knowing as they did, how little reason there had been to gather records from this site before.

We remind the reader of the high proportion of veteran trees, great crested newts, dormice, otters, voles and nightingales they found here on this small, highly ecologically important, but undesignated, site. And this is despite the high proportion of failed or inadequate surveys which were actually in this location, and the gross downplaying of the significance of the habitat importance in this area, which can only be described as at a level designed to deceive and conceal, such as the meadowland at Cratemans and the importance of the green lane.

There are a significant number and variety of protected and red- listed species including nesting nightingales, great crested newts, badgers, and turtle doves, that will be adversely affected, by the destruction of habitats, and noise and light pollution from both the construction and operation of the substation. The nightingale breeding sites are, perhaps, amongst the most significant in Sussex, and will not recover, as evidenced by the Wild Flower Consultancy and Sir David Attenborough's comments about Knepp's achievements.

The evidence would suggest that Rampion are downplaying the impact on wildlife habitats and the environment and the extent to which the losses can be mitigated in this instance. We argue that their choice of substation site and cable route has a negative impact on the very biodiversity and resilience a green energy project should be aiming to protect.

Yet even Rampion's own documents prove the special ecological importance of this area, as from their surveys, many of the important or protected habitats and species occur either highly significantly, or exclusively, at this location. Eight of the fourteen Important Hedgerows they have identified are in this area, three of the seven veteran trees, plus three near-veteran, it is the only location to have hazel dormice or otters, a high proportion of the Great Crested Newts, even though a high proportion of local ponds were not surveyed, and one of the few to have water voles.

The Vegetation Retention Plan which accompanies the Outline Code of Construction Practice shows *"hedgerows, tree lines, woodland, **scrub**, calcareous grassland, semi-improved species-rich grassland, ponds and watercourses which are to be retained. Should any of these highlighted habitats require removal due to unforeseen circumstances at the detailed design phase, they will be highlighted to the relevant competent authority with a reasoned justification provided. These unforeseen, additional losses would be accounted for through commitment C-104 covering the commitment to the provision of biodiversity net gain."*

The evidence submitted by Janine Creaye during the examination **show far more extensive scrub** around the cable route near Cratemans and the Cowfold Stream. It will not be possible to create the cable trench and haul road without far more extensive destruction of the nightingale territories than the Rampion maps suggest. The **extent of this destruction is NOT unforeseen** as she has been

highlighting this issue to Rampion since the informal consultation. Similarly, the reptile habitats and high-quality meadowland, and the green lane, the importance of which they refuse even to acknowledge.

Even at this late stage there is lack of clarity as to how the haul road would impact on the trees and hedges; some points along the route appear to be impossible to pass if the hedges and trees marked for retention remain. It appears necessary for the haul road to keep crossing the trench to remain within the DCO boundary, with no explanation of how this can be possible. Are we to see 'unforeseen' applications to extend beyond the boundary post consent?

There is no assessment of the ecological impacts of construction or operation noise and vibration pollutants on the sensitive ecology on the haul road or substation site, including the lake. No consideration is given to the noise or vibration effects of HGVs and other vehicles turning in and out of the Oakdene and Kent Street sites or waiting on the road to do so, nor indeed of the Air Quality effects of this.

Too little biodiversity mitigation is actually proposed here. The losses locally are truly devastating and Rampion know they cannot actually replace what is lost. Nevertheless, if consented, BNG mitigations *must be on site*.

Cratemans Historic Farmstead

The term Farmstead includes both the building and the grounds and means that the context and land are extremely important for its Grade 2 listing. In this case, this includes the ancient wildflower meadowland around it, the rarity of which, in these biodiversity depleted times, deserves to be preserved, and has been amply evidenced by the Arborweald surveys and Janine Creaye's reports.

Over 97% of wildflower meadows have been lost since the 1930s with flower-rich grassland now only covering a mere 1% of the UK's land area. How can it make sense to destroy a large area of unimproved lowland meadow at Cratemans. It is not credible that this can simply be replanted in the way they suggest, or the wildlife living within it rapidly recover, especially as it is a known rich habitat for reptiles.

The British Herpetological Society's Survey 'Make the Adder Count' warns us **that adders will be extinct in the UK in the next 15-20 years**. One of the issues is vibration and the impact on breeding and feeding (adders have no ears and rely on vibration sense) The vibration from trenchless crossings, machinery and HGVs on the haul road will affect them, and the area will be destroyed by the cable route and haul road. How can it be acceptable to allow this wanton disregard for biodiversity loss?

If this project goes ahead, Knepp Castle may soon be the only place left in the country where turtle doves can be heard, and the nightingale population of Sussex will be significantly diminished.

Green lane

The importance of this ancient lane is supported by clear evidence from Janine Creaye to Rampion from as early as 2021. Arborweald's reports this year reinforce this. Yet still Rampion refuse to acknowledge its ecological value or to make any attempt to adapt their proposals to limit the damage. This ancient feature is representative of the high degree of connectivity across the whole of this landscape and which will be irrevocably severed in so many places by these proposals, so unnecessarily proposed in this location.

The proposed development interrupts or compromises existing wildlife corridors between the Cratemans Farm area and all the way through to the A272 via the green lane and Kent Street. The abundance of wildlife and ancient habitats co-exists in a balanced way and interference is therefore likely to have severe and potentially unmitigable consequences.

Kent street

The visual and ecological destruction caused by the extraordinary degree of hedge and tree loss and the expansion of this tiny lane into effectively a two-lane highway, the industrialisation, the total unsuitability of the use of this lane, and the disruption to residents, are representative of the cavalier way Rampion have gone about this whole application 'in the national interest.' A perfectly reasonable alternative exists at Wineham Lane, yet because they thought it was easier and cheaper for them to use Oakendene they have ignored the massive harms they are causing. As a result of the examination, even they can surely not fail to see that the choice of site needs to be revisited, as it is not even easier or cheaper any more, because of all the adaptations they will have to make.

Oakendene

It is clear Rampion grabbed at this site as there was no apparent opposition in the earliest consultation because of inadequacies in the consultation process. They therefore either did not realise or chose to ignore the flooding, the terrible impacts on the Grade 2 listed Oakendene Manor, the biodiversity of the site, the devastating tree and hedge loss which this site would require, and the visual, economic or traffic impacts.

This was the only site under consideration with a large lake, home to a huge variety of birds, insects, bats and other species. Adjacent woodlands and numerous small ponds plus the mature hedging and trees in the fields where the substation is proposed add up to create a richly diverse habitat, which has been in balance for many years. The devastation of the Oakendene parkland will permanently destroy the adjacent habitats in which the creatures who benefit from the lake also exist. The food chain which supports them will change as permanent light and noise affects night time creatures, especially feeding and breeding behaviours. Almost no attention has been paid to this during the examination. We cited several papers about this and verbal evidence from respected scientists in our impact statement.

The insect population has also been shown to be particularly abundant in this location, which again, we know is in serious decline elsewhere across the nation, with consequences extending upwards through the food chain.

Studies suggest that the permanent industrialisation of the site and the noise and vibration will mean that yes, wildlife may return to the area, but not the rarer species which currently have a safe habitat there, nor the range or abundance of flora or fauna (see p112 of our LIS, REP1-089)

There has been no assessment of the impact of noise, vibration or light on the wildlife population of Oakendene, the lake or the haul road.

King Charles' comments to the Royal Horticultural Society, of which he is patron:

To quote from King Charles' interview with RHS July, regarding the environmental destruction of wild places: *"so many of these things had taken hundreds of years to grow. It takes forever to recreate lost habitat. We have to rediscover the absolute importance-critical now- of working in harmony with nature"*. **Rampion would do well to learn from him; they have shown no interest in preserving or protecting the habitats green energy purports to save.**

Landscape and Visual Impacts:

Much of the focus in the early stages of the consultation by the media and by conservation groups was on the undoubtedly important visual impact of the windfarm along the coast, on the South Downs National Park, and historically extremely important buildings such as Arundel Castle. The second consultation mainly concerned the cable route. This has allowed the substation location to be 'chosen' without the consideration and attention it should have received.

We see the result of this with the ever-increasing loss of important vegetation as Rampion are finally forced to think their plans through a little more clearly.

The historic centre of Cowfold is ancient in character with rapid change to a rural landscape immediately outside the confines of the built area, even on the very busy A272, which, though busy, very much retains a rural feel. The substation will mean a great change to the whole visual character of Cowfold. Currently, the only dominant structures are the village hall and St Peters church within the Conservation Area in the village centre, and outside the village, the beautiful spire of St Hugh's Monastery to the south.

Sadly, Wineham Lane lost the special character which marks out Kent Street, in the 1960s when the first substation was built. It is a local policy not to build housing in isolated places but to join it to existing communities. In the same way, it would make sense not to destroy yet more areas of our precious landscape, but to keep the new substation as close to the old one as possible.

Looking at how visible the main substation remains from Wineham lane 60 years later, Rampion's claims of how rapidly visual impact will become 'negligible' are utterly fanciful.

Also, the substation *will* remain visible from the higher ground of the AONB just 500m north of the substation entrance, especially in winter and at night.

Anything approaching realistic viewpoint analysis has had to be painfully extracted from Rampion, and even now continues to downplay the reality, as trees and hedges to be removed are often left in the images, but even without this removal, what they do show is still monstrously industrialised.

The ProWs are an important and valued part of the Cowfold surroundings and will for ever be transformed by the industrialised view, a brutal disconnect from the current landscape which surrounds the historic village centre.

The close board fencing which Rampion appear to think is an acceptable screen for the substation, is in itself highly industrialising and inappropriate for a rural location. Not only is it visually unappealing, it is disruptive to wildlife movements.

The 'curved access' to the substation site barely hides anything. It should be revisited to provide much more in the way of bends to reduce visibility from the A272.

All of these visual impacts depend on the overall height of the finished substation above current ground level, which remains uncertain. We know that the final height of Rampion 1 buildings was reduced to accommodate concerns by residents. This would be more expensive; probably the reason the suggestion has been ignored by RWE this time, even before they understood that the site floods.

The multiple bellmouths, hedge, scrub, tree and verge removal now understood to be necessary on Kent Street are entirely the result of failure to consult properly before formulating their submission and it cannot be 'in the national interest' to permit this wanton wholesale destruction of landscapes

and ecology in the name of green energy. There has to be a requirement to do as little harm as possible or we will never reverse the desperate decline in so much of our wildlife. **It is no coincidence that the high degree of biodiversity and the largely undeveloped landscape which still retains much of its ancient character, are found in this one small location**

Implications of the Kent Street battery storage farm refusal for Rampion:

WSCC share our major concerns over the terrible landscape and visual impacts and the industrialisation of views, the massive vegetation loss on Kent Street, and the clear evidence presented by Janine Creaye of the ecological damage of all of this.

The battery storage farm application has now been refused; largely on landscape and visual grounds, and the impacts on the highly rural location. Even Horsham DC, who have declared a climate emergency, and who recently approved the very controversial 100-acre Cobwood solar farm nearby, could not approve the location on Kent Street of the Enso battery storage farm, just a few metres further down Kent Street from the proposed substation.

The substation is much bigger and taller, and closer to the AONB, with the removal of far more screening vegetation.

How much more is it true for Rampion 2 than the battery storage farm, that this project should not be placed here!

Substantial Harm to Oakendene Manor:

The National Policy Statement EN-1 states that: "5.9.26 The Secretary of State should give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving all heritage assets. Any harm or loss of significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, **or from development within its setting**) **should require clear and convincing justification.**

5.9.27 **Substantial harm to or loss of significance of a grade II Listed Building** or a grade II Registered Park or Garden **should be exceptional.** "We would argue that the harm would be substantial, its significance would be adversely affected and that there is no clear or convincing justification for this in terms of public benefit as reasonable alternative sites exist at Wineham Lane.

Rampion argue that because the building itself is not harmed the harm cannot be substantial. We dispute the rationale for this statement; please see Appendix 1 of our other deadline 6 submission (Comments on any other submissions received by Deadline 5).

The historic Capability Brown style parkland is extremely important to the heritage context of the manor house and is a major part of the way it is viewed from the south. This will be permanently lost by the physical barrier of the 12m high substation. The views to the south from the house which will remain after the substation is built are merely tunnel-like being so narrow, and even that is likely to be lost because of the need for BNG planting. It will also result in the permanent loss of all the agricultural land around the house; a further significant change to its setting.

It is not just the built heritage which is important when considering the historic environment. There will be a huge perceptual change in the character of the historic landscape, including from the PRowS around the lake and woods which are currently enjoyed by many.

Similarly, the impact on ancient, quiet Kent Street, even with screening will be enormous and impossible to mitigate appropriately given the height and footprint of the proposed substation.

Traffic:

A272

The impacts on the A272 are a major concern for all residents of Cowfold and the thousands of people who use this road on a daily basis, yet have been dismissed by Rampion who consistently try to 'prove' that it will not be a problem.

Emergency vehicles are to be heard going up and down this part of the A272 multiple times a day: it is a key route for emergency vehicles. It would be unacceptable, possibly life threatening, for them to be made to wait whilst huge vehicles trundle slowly back and forth from the compounds. The increased queuing further increases the risk of delay.

Modelling

The A272 plans are unworkable, with so many access points so close together and so close to the AQMA in Cowfold. The congestion will cause untold misery for drivers and residents for years. Accidents will occur. Their traffic modelling is inadequate, confusing and not yet complete.

Consistent failure to recognise anything other than percentage increase in traffic numbers, rather than the fact that the road at this point is at or beyond capacity, or the impacts of turning traffic, and the three access points so close together, means that their calculations of traffic flows and pollution impacts are not correct. All of which would be avoidable if Wineham Lane were used instead: the road is not at capacity there, and there would be no impact on the AQMA. Simply using theoretical values makes the wrong assumptions based on traffic numbers, although it is a not unreasonable judgement at the Wineham Lane turning point, because the road there is not at capacity.

With an average of one vehicle in just under every 3 seconds travelling along the A272 at present near Oakendene, and especially when the traffic is already backing up, it is unrealistic to imagine that the thousands of vehicles turning in and out of the compounds, including worker vehicles, will not impact on traffic flows, causing huge problems to the 18000 daily users of the road and the many local businesses.

These disruptions are likely to be much longer lasting than Rampion suggest. Rampion's proposed timescales are unlikely to be accurate, given the track record for Rampion 1 which was supposed to take two years and took over six years to complete.

Even now, the traffic backs up to Kent Street and beyond at least twice a day, and not just at peak times.

Considerable inconsistencies and uncertainties remain about their traffic figures remain between documents, which cannot be accepted as realistic until there is credible evidence explaining why their staff vehicle numbers are so much lower than for the much smaller Rampion 1 project. No justification for the figures has been offered, nor any bills of quantities for the traffic generation generally, which might enable meaningful scrutiny of their data.

They are unable (or unwilling) to give details of types of vehicles such as AILs and evidence for the impacts remains lacking.

The impacts on air pollution both along the A272 opposite Oakendene where several cottages are directly on the road, and in the Cowfold AQMA continue to be severely underestimated. This is because they do not take into account the additional impact of the 70000 or more LGVs in causing traffic congestion in the already overloaded village centre, nor the effect that waiting on the road to turn in and out of the various compounds will have as queues rapidly build up behind them. We have previously submitted evidence from Imperial College about this; when a road is at capacity, *every additional vehicle counts*, by increasing that congestion, not just HGVs and percentage increases are no longer sufficient. In addition, the stop-start behaviour of queuing traffic increases the pollution beyond that expected from simple traffic counts.

No detail has yet been given of the work which will certainly be required on the A272 or Kent Street and how this could be managed without huge disruption to traffic and people's lives. It is clear also that the vehicle numbers for these works are not included in their figures.

Holding bay:

Rampion do not appear to feel the need for a holding bay to the east of the site to control the movement of HGVs. This proved very necessary for the far less problematic turning off the A272 into Wineham Lane during Rampion 1. The use of the western compound to control traffic on the A272 cannot work *as it will already have had to travel along the A272 to reach this point*.

Accidents

The stretch of the A272 between the industrial estate and Kent Street is a notorious accident hotspot. The accident rate and significant traffic emissions to the east of Cowfold have been a matter of concern to Cowfold Parish Council for some years.

For safety reasons, the original entrance to Oakendene Manor was moved years ago from close to access point A63, to a drive entered from the Oakendene industrial estate. The traffic has become much worse over time and this remains a site of frequent accidents, often as vehicles turn in or out of side roads or Kent Street. Yet this is the very place that Rampion have chosen for the substation access in the misguided notion that it is a safe and easy idea. As I write, another accident has closed the A272 caused by a head on collision at the exact point where the substation entrance A63 is proposed.

The refusal to consider traffic lights, as they know they will add to the congestion (which on the other hand they don't accept will occur however), will make accidents more likely as traffic turns in and out of the compounds.

Traffic is a serious concern for not only those in the immediate vicinity but the whole village and those who use the A272 regularly. This is in striking contrast to the situation at Wineham Lane- nobody raised traffic on the A272 as a concern in the Rampion 1 Relevant Representations. Indeed, there were no Relevant Representations from Bolney village at all. Far fewer people were really impacted and hardly any to the extent that is occurring widely in this case. For Rampion 1 the impact on nearby villages was minimal; many people did not know it was happening. There is much more congestion as one approaches Cowfold, this project is much larger than Rampion 1 and the movements of vehicles in and out of Kent Street, Oakendene and the western compound will be much more complex than just entering and leaving Wineham Lane.

Core working hours

WSCC's traffic data clearly shows that the traffic is almost as heavy throughout the day as it is at peak times, meaning that attempts to avoid peak hours will simply create congestion at other times as well. We see this frequently as the traffic often appears to queue to Keng Street at non peak times, for no apparent reason.

The concept of shoulder hours was suggested by Bolney Parish Council to reduce the impact on residents, by suggesting only quiet activities at the beginning and end of the day. Rampion, in typical fashion, appear to be intending to use them to extend the times in which HGV deliveries can occur, which was not the original purpose at all.

Reinstatement

Even though Rampion say they will 'encourage' their workers to avoid side roads, we know that they will take the quicker option when the congestion starts to build up. The other 18000 users of the A272 certainly will! Rampion therefore should be required to reinstate **all** side roads locally after construction, including Picts Lane, Bulls Lane and Dragons Lane, and not just Kent Street and Moatfield Lane.

Kent Street

Rampion's main publicly confirmed reason for the choice of Oakendene was that it allowed direct access from the A272 to the substation site. What did not occur to them was that they would need to use Kent Street to the devastating extent they now realise to be necessary, in order to access the haul road and cable route from the substation site. This should have been taken into account when assessing the substation site, but local people were not adequately consulted. They either did not realise this or chose to ignore it.

Their plans to attempt to get the enormous vehicles into Kent Street do not take into account the extent to which it is used by walkers, cyclists and riders. Even the best-behaved horses may be spooked by these enormous vehicles. At this late stage they do not even know whether the road is strong enough to take their low loaders and HGVs. Our evidence is clear: it is not strong enough, yet Rampion continue to sideline this issue until post consent, which gives no security to residents and enables the harm impact to be downplayed.

As the examination has progressed Rampion have had to create ever bigger and more destructive visibility splays, access points, and passing places, with extensive removal of verge vegetation, trees and hedges. Ditch reinforcement will be required. In essence, they will be having to create a new two-lane road capable of taking these heavy, wide vehicles.

The four passing places are each 45m in length, several will have to go into the hedges, quite literally shifting the goalposts (or DCO boundary) as even at this stage they find themselves having to think on their feet from one deadline to the next as they get themselves into more and more mess. The passing places do not appear to be wide enough.

The traffic counts Rampion have submitted at deadline 5 are highly dubious and inconsistent with several previous results. Without the publishing of the full report, these figures cannot be accepted as credible.

It would be a criminal act of ecological and landscape vandalism to permit this to go ahead; it is so unnecessary as a readymade road exists at Wineham Lane, expressly widened for the purpose of allowing substation construction traffic to use it.

It is time to reconsider this whole plan and move away from Oakendene and the industrialisation of Kent Street and the whole traffic nightmare.

National Highways request updated traffic modelling based on post covid patterns. (p37 doc ref 6.2.23). The only assessment which has been done (see table 23-15) is in March 2023 where a visit to study area 1 was undertaken to *"assess all roads, and junctions, all proposed access sites and the PRowWs affected by the onshore elements and confirmation of the suitability of roads for HGV traffic"* **Yet there is no documentation of the findings of this study. And no mention of whether Kent Street was assessed for 'suitability for HGVs'.**

In July 2021, James d'Alessandro wrote to a resident who was concerned about the use of Kent Street by construction traffic: *"In January 2021, the Council responded to the Rampion 2 informal consultation process to the effect that Kent Street is not deemed appropriate for temporary construction access and an access directly off the A272 is acceptable in principle."*

This was indeed the opinion of Horsham District council some years ago (see Application number DC/06/1049 on the Horsham Planning Portal). A study by WSCC commissioned by Horsham DC (the WSCC Transport Planning Services Consultation document in DC/06/1049) deemed the access to be so unsuitable that the application was turned down. Up to 40 cars 1-3 times a month was likely to push the level of use up by around 29%, well beyond the 10% increase viewed as significant by the Institute of Highway and Transportation. The *daily* number of much larger *goods vehicles* approximately 6 days a week for four years for Rampion is considerably in excess of this. The survey also concluded that a further reason for refusal was that Kent Street was **"a road of insufficient width to allow two vehicles to pass safely to the detriment of road safety"**.

Moatfield Lane

The need to interfere with the access to people's homes in this appalling way is entirely due to the choice of substation site-they did not realise until April 23 that it was in fact a dead-end lane on which people actually lived.

It is shown on their maps as a bridleway only. **The reality is that the access from Kent Street is the only access to their homes, farms and businesses.** The residents will therefore be completely cut off for 'just a few days'.

It is disingenuous to claim that this lane will be 'used' only for operational purposes. If it needs to be closed, and also somehow the vehicles to do this work will need to access it, then clearly access is needed during construction as well as operation. It will also be repeatedly crossed by vehicles using the haul road.

Economy:

The economic consequences of locating the substation at Oakendene would be significantly more damaging than locating it at Bolney. If Oakendene is chosen, it would negatively affect between 100-130 Cowfold businesses, around 70 of them at the Oakendene Industrial estate, and those 18,000 commuters who use this stretch of road every day. In contrast, using either Wineham Lane North or Wineham Lane South sites, would affect about five Bolney businesses and considerably fewer commuters, because the congestion does not extend along the A272 to Wineham Lane.

There has been no consideration at all of the economic consequences of this choice of location, even though the Oakendene Industrial Estate is recognized as a key employment area by HDC.

Flooding:

Oakendene

We have provided ample evidence of the significant flood risk at Oakendene, and the far lower risks at either of the Wineham Lane sites. The compaction of the huge compound to the north of the substation itself will further exacerbate this.

It is also important to consider the fact that all the water from the higher AONB from the north feeds into the Cowfold stream in the west by the western compound, but also via channels under the A272, directly from Longhouse Lane, Bulls Lane, and Picts Lane, through the fields to the north of the proposed Oakendene substation site, **across the site** and into the tributaries south of the site.

The drainage and swales are compromised by the presence of an underground high voltage cable lying under the site, which Rampion have not mentioned during the examination.

The removal of 600m of tree and hedgerow from the site will further exacerbate the flooding issues.

In the winter months the whole site is boggy and often flooded, the stream is overflowing, meaning that the water cannot actually be drained away. This means that the only option is to raise the level. It also means that actual work at the site will be extremely difficult for 5 months of the year as vehicles will become bogged in. Farmers know the land is unworkable for months here. The remaining time will conflict with breeding bird and dormouse restrictions.

At the Ashurst meeting and the Cowfold meeting in 2022, and even at the Cowfold Information event in June 2023, we were told there was the possibility to lower the ground level of the substation to reduce the visual impact. This would now seem to be highly unlikely as they have recognised that the site floods and therefore, if anything, the ground level may have to be raised, making the visual impact even worse.

The haul road:

From Flood Risk Screening Assessment (doc ref 6.4.26.2), and the commitments register C-75, *“Construction and permanent developments in flood planes will be avoided where ever possible”*. It is avoidable in this instance, as the substation could be located in Wineham Lane, near Rampion 1, which is not an official flood risk area and photographic evidence would support this.

Table 8-1 Embedded environmental measures relating to flood risk management, no 36: *“Works on areas identified as floodplain, will be programmed to avoid the period between October and February inclusive”*. How would this be possible at Oakendene without extending the build for another few years, or in the case of the Cowfold Stream, accommodating the breeding birds season?

Soils and agriculture

The NPS EN-3, para 2.10.29, published in January 2024, refers to solar farms when it says *“applicants should, where possible, utilise suitable previously developed land, brownfield land, contaminated land and industrial land. Where the proposed use of any agricultural land has been shown to be necessary, poorer quality land should be preferred to higher quality land avoiding the use of ‘Best and Most Versatile’ agricultural land where possible”*. How much more should this refer to

substation sites, where not even sheep can graze beneath the units, as with solar panels, and returning to normal afterwards will be much more challenging.

Rampion dismissed brownfield sites such as the cement works on the grounds of cost, and have chosen a location for the substation and the permanent BNG mitigations where Doc Ref 6.2.20 tells us that a quarter of the land at Oakendene is ALC Grade 3a or grade 2. The Wineham substation area is of a lower grade overall.

Table 20-10 tells us that Rampion have scoped out the loss of agricultural land during the operational phase. We absolutely disagree with this statement as **all** the Oakendene land within the DCO will be used, if not for the substation footprint itself, then for access or for landscaping and biodiversity restoration and net gain. It cannot therefore be used for agriculture without undoing the habitat creation work. It is therefore irrelevant where exactly on the site the Grade 2 and 3a land is.

Noise and Vibration:

These impacts are largely dismissed by Rampion. Human impacts cannot be underestimated especially for those living so close to the cable route, traffic routes and the substation site. 4-5 years is not an insignificant time for the health harms of incessant noise to be endured. The A272 at Oakendene is already in the top 1% for road noise levels in the country.

These disruptions are likely to be longer lasting than Rampion suggest. Rampion's proposed timescales are also unlikely to be accurate, given the track record for Rampion 1 which was supposed to take two years and took over six years to complete.

Impact on wildlife: See ecology above

Cumulative Impacts:

The nearby Cobwood Solar Farm has just been consented, which will have a significant cumulative impact visually and potentially also on traffic. In the few miles between the A23 and A24 close to the A272, there is also another solar farm application and three more applications for battery storage farms. In addition, the recently refused application of Kent Street will no doubt be appealed. There is no joined up thinking about these green energy projects which currently allow one area to be bombarded in this way. We call on the government to review this as at the moment, big, largely foreign, companies make vast profits and UK communities, wildlife and small local businesses and ordinary working people are left to suffer the consequences, and pick up the costs.

Policy:

The National Policy Statement EN-5:

There has been no regard to 2.2.8 or 9 (see Consideration of Alternatives above)

The National Policy Statement EN-1:

5.4.42 *As a general principle, and subject to the specific policies below, development should, in line with the mitigation hierarchy, aim to avoid significant harm to biodiversity and geological conservation interests, **including through consideration of reasonable alternatives**. Where*

significant harm cannot be avoided, impacts should be mitigated and as a last resort, appropriate compensation measures should be sought.

5.4.43 *If significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a **development cannot be avoided (for example through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then the Secretary of State will give significant weight to any residual harm and consent may be refused.***

There is a suitable alternative at Wineham, where the ecological impact, though not negligible, will be far less. Unfortunately, the biodiversity is much less there because of the damage already done by previous substations and road infrastructure.

In addition, if not used for the substation site, the land at Wineham will eventually be given over to Battery Storage, which, apart from the need for a cable route, will be almost as damaging locally. The alternative plans for Oakendene include a biodiverse ecosystem, open for the enjoyment of local residents, electricity self-sufficiency for an expanded Industrial Estate, protecting both the existing wildlife corridor and local jobs into the future, with little or no transport required to reach either of them, and enhancing the climate change resilience of this community and its environment. It also protects the area for the future; if the substation goes ahead at Oakendene, this area too risks ecological destruction from the relentless march of battery storage farms.

Section 5.4.2 *“The government’s policy for biodiversity in England is set out in the Environmental Improvement Plan¹⁷⁴, Biodiversity 2020¹⁷⁵, the National Pollinator Strategy¹⁷⁶ and the UK Marine Strategy¹⁷⁷. The aim is to halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people. This aim needs to be viewed in the context of the challenge presented by climate change. Healthy, naturally functioning ecosystems and coherent ecological networks will be more resilient and adaptable to climate change effects. Failure to address this challenge will result in significant adverse impact on biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides.”*

[The King’s Speech](#)

The King’s speech had quite a lot to say about the government’s green energy aims. He also said *“There has been an unprecedented increase in developers withholding agreements to connect to the grid, **with far more generation in the queue than we will need to power the country by 2050.** 85 per cent of projects have later connection dates than requested, often into the late-2030s.”*

This is even more reason to avoid this harmful proposal; it is **not** in the national interest or even fulfilling a national need. The Beyond 2030 report also means that from 2035 Rampion will not be needed to meet our green energy needs. Even if it goes ahead on time, it will only contribute a few years to the ‘national need’. So much destruction of communities and wildlife for so little gain! Instead, we should focus on improving grid connections to ensure the energy we create can actually be properly distributed.

This King’s Speech, like the last, also highlighted the importance of halting biodiversity loss as well as tackling climate change, *“**unlocking a win-win outcome for the economy and for nature,**”*

[The parliamentary debate on Planning, The Green Belt and Rural Affairs, 19/07/2024,](#)

At the conclusion of the debate, Steve Reed MP The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs states:

"Nature underpins all the Government's missions. Without nature, there is no economy, no health, no food and no society. Nature is at crisis point. The Tories left Britain one of the most nature-depleted countries on Earth. A third of our bird and mammal species face extinction....

...This Government are committed to the legally binding environmental targets set under the Environment Act 2021—targets that this Government will meet by working in a new partnership with the nature non-governmental organisations".

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-07-19/debates/6A1FA3E9-41B0-434A-B13C-B6680AA87023/PlanningTheGreenBeltAndRuralAffairs>

If the new Government truly means what it says here about protecting nature, they cannot reasonably permit this proposal, which is in direct conflict with these aims.

The water companies were part of our national infrastructure before, but were bought by sovereign wealth funds from the Middle East and International pension funds. It is obvious from the repeated sewage pollution incidents we hear about, and the extent of repair needed to deal with leaking pipes, that the country did not benefit from this infrastructure ownership change; quite the opposite as money and funds poured out of the country via dividends and bonuses. The same is happening for new green infrastructure. In both cases the UK and the working man is left to pick up the pieces and costs at the end of the project. **The government talks of a state-owned green energy system. If it means what it says, it must stop approving these wealth fund owned projects immediately.**

Carbon footprint:

What is the carbon footprint of constructing the wind turbines? The raw materials are commonly extracted from Australia and then transported to India for processing, before being sent over to Europe. The maintenance of these blades and cogs is very expensive since it is a specialist and dangerous operation to maintain, the cost of which would be passed onto the consumer. Obviously, RWE are not concerned if the winds drops or that the ongoing costs are high, or any other problems they leave behind them, as they are only concerned with their government grants and the profits their investors will make.

Not just the energy costs of the manufacturing of the wind turbines and all the cabling, concrete etc, but also the maintenance and decommissioning, and the release of carbon from the sea bed, the previously untouched meadowland fields along the cable route and hedge and tree loss must be added to the balance when considering the benefits to the nation v harms, otherwise we only have half the picture and are not in a position to weigh harms and benefits in the balance.

The High Court has agreed to hear a judicial review challenge against the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero's decision to greenlight a carbon capture gas power station in Teesside. Upstream emissions and operational emissions, it is argued, will hinder rather than help the delivery of the Government's net zero commitment and decarbonisation of the power sector. We await the court's decision, but if successful it will mean that the overall production, maintenance and decommissioning costs in energy terms, of the Rampion proposals will have to be weighed in the balance.

Add to this RWE's track record of open cast mining and deforestation in Germany and we do not have a pretty picture at all.

Summary:

Rampion have followed the risky strategy of not producing evidence in a timely manner. It is very hard to justify the choice of substation location on sustainability or environmental impact grounds.

We see a disorganised proposal, poorly thought out, doing enormous, irremediable damage to the countryside including precious wildlife habitats, some of which are for the most endangered species such as nightingales, turtle doves, and reptiles.

The behaviour of Rampion has been underhand (eg the traffic surveys, the meadowland classifications), there has been a lack of frankness, but much evasiveness when answering direct questions, particularly apparent in the ISHs, and there has been a lack of willingness to engage or consult with affected parties or communities.

The experience of the consultation and examination does not give any confidence that Rampion's promise of weekly meetings with residents to listen and immediately address concerns, will be anything other than window dressing.

It is clear from the many comments made by statutory consultees, affected parties and others that there are still so many loose ends and unresolved issues. They should all have been sorted out by proper consultation and engagement with landowners and communities *before* the DCO was submitted. The heavy-handed approach which Rampion have demonstrated, all in the name of National Interest (not theirs of course) is unacceptable.

There is so much they have not decided or properly surveyed yet, making it impossible to assess true harms. At such a late stage this is not acceptable; how can harms be assessed if baselines are unclear, and exactly what is proposed is not known? Too much is being left until after consent. In fact, the evidence would suggest that Rampion have deliberately sought to put off too many decisions in order to minimise the apparent harms, when they are being weighed in the balance against the value of the project. Some examples include:

- Responding to whether the cables will be brought on ALLs or ordinary HGVs
- The design and access route for A62
- Shoulder hours and their acceptable use
- The assessment of the road condition of Kent Street even though all evidence points to it being highly unsuitable
- Proper details of the Kent Street passing places
- The meadowland quality at Cratemans even though, again, the evidence is clear
- Badger licences, reptile surveys and so many other issues which will be presented as 'unexpected' ecological findings post consent.
- Whether there will be substantive changes to existing site levels at the substation which could result in significant changes to landscape and visual impacts.

The sites at Wineham Lane do not flood, do not cause so much disruption to so many road users or businesses and it is clear from the ecological studies Rampion *have* done that it is far less environmentally sensitive. Add to this the admission that in fact there was little to choose between them, ("***On balance, there is a marginal preference for the Oakendene site.***"), even before they understood these additional issues, there really is no justification for the choice, other than they thought nobody had noticed and they believed they would not face protests. This is not a sound basis on which to try to justify so much destruction and disturbance.

Also, please note that in weighing the balance, the benefits of the Rampion substation choice should not be weighed against doing nothing, but against Oakendene's original proposals to provide a sympathetically designed, energy self-sufficient expanded industrial estate for the benefit of the community with rewilding and protection of the future of the listed manor house. This would not require the destruction of Kent Street, the green lane or Cratemans, or the extensive hedge and tree loss at Oakendene itself.

Allowing this amount of harm, destroying the very habitats and wildlife you aim to protect long term, is like curing the disease by killing the patient

They can no longer pretend the hedge and tree loss will be anything other than profound at Oakendene and on Kent Street, unlike the Wineham Lane sites, or that the impact on the Manor House will not be highly significant. HDC and WSCC have raised major concerns about the Landscape and Visual impacts, the traffic impacts on the A272 will cause major disruption, and, finally, there is the almost farcical situation they find themselves in with traffic management on Kent Street. It is time they revisited their 'Marginal Preference' for Oakendene.

Conclusion:

The whole project is in the wrong place: the wind is less here, reducing energy efficiency and increasing costs to the nation per unit generated. The Beyond 2030 report means that after 2035 the Rampion windfarm will be surplus to requirement, giving us only a very few years when it is actually contributing to net zero. Throughout, there has been poor consultation and engagement, and little consideration for anything beyond the financial impact on the company.

We are the most nature depleted country in the world. Yet Rampion's decision-making rides roughshod over precious ecological habitats and the heritage landscapes we should be aiming to protect for future generations. We have a duty to consider the negative impacts against the national interest of providing green energy as quickly as possible. The national interest is not however, served by focussing solely on green energy provision; diversity loss, the economic impacts locally are not just local losses but have a national impact. **The national interest is not served by destroying our heritage, jobs and wildlife.**

We must not push 'green' solutions without consideration for the wider impact. We need a holistic, joined up and well thought out plan for the climate crisis. Hurrying through half-hearted and poorly thought-out solutions such as this risk making things worse.

What is more, the Beyond 2030 report means that from 2035 there will be no need for this project, so it will only give a few years of benefit at most-all this devastation for so little gain.

'We are proposing a development which is in the national interest' has been their repeated reply when faced with accusations of reckless environmental damage. The need to ensure we look after nature and do as little damage as possible whilst seeking greener options is also in this nature depleted country's interest, possibly more so otherwise we follow a very dangerous path. There are other options available which are equally in the national interest, but with far less national harm.

We should not be exchanging green energy for green spaces

The national need for green energy infrastructure needs to be considered of course, but in such a nature depleted country the destruction of so much habitat and landscape is not just a local issue

but a national one. Similarly in these difficult economic times, the economic impacts on the businesses around the substation site and the effects on tourism across the county have national consequences not just local ones.

If this examination is to be seen as anything other than lip service and rubber stamping, then this application should be refused; there are so many failings on so many levels they simply do not deserve to succeed, or it will set an unhappy precedent and leave the door open to many more harmful and destructive applications.

We trust that the ExA, as a result of their thorough, searching questions, seen throughout the examination, will conclude that this application cannot justify its claims and is not fit for purpose.