

Jeremy Smethurst – Concluding Statement:

The consultation leading to the choice of the Oakendene substation site was deceitful. There was a failure to contact a large number of residents who should have received Section 42 letters in the first consultation, including many businesses who would be badly impacted on the Oakendene industrial Estate, and even those households who did receive at least a leaflet, were not really alerted to what might be under consultation, because the leaflets referred simply to a substation location '*in the vicinity of the existing Bolney substation*'. Newspapers and other media also referred to it as the 'new substation at Bolney'.

This skewed the consultation responses to disproportionately come from Wineham. They did not look at why, oddly, there was a lack of response from the Cowfold/Kent Street area. In addition, when it was mentioned, it wasn't referred to as Oakendene until *after* it had been chosen. Neither was Cowfold mentioned before this point.

Since then, they have tried to justify the 'reasons' for their choice by making them fit after the event. Because they did not consult local people properly, they did not understand many of the problems with this site, believing that it was by far the easier option, and that because there had been little opposition up to that point, they would be able to push it through without rigorous scrutiny.

This has resulted in the increasingly complicated situations we now see on the A272 and Kent Street and the ever more evident ecological harms, which cannot be mitigated in the lifetime of the substation.

A272

Rampion have never considered the A272 in any other terms than traffic numbers; they did not take into consideration the fact that the road is at capacity approaching the Cowfold AQMA, because of the mini roundabouts. Nor have they understood (or perhaps they have refused to accept) that because they require three access points so close together, and so close to the mini roundabouts, *all off the busy A272*, they will create terrible congestion and delays in a way which would not occur by the use of Wineham Lane, and compounds and cable route access points *off the much quieter Wineham Lane*.

This in turn will affect the businesses in the village and along the A272 opposite Oakendene, and in particular the 100 or so small businesses at the Oakendene Industrial Estate. In contrast, there are only a handful of businesses in Wineham which would have been affected.

Further, the stretch of the A272 which they have chosen to impact in this way is an accident hotspot, with frequent collisions near Kent Street, the industrial estate entrance and the point in the road where they propose the new substation access. Drivers are often taken by surprise as traffic slows to turn into, or comes out of, the side roads. The thousands of HGVs and LGVs turning in and out of the compounds and Kent Street will make this so much worse.

Rampion refuse to accept that traffic lights would be safer, because they know they will further increase congestion. They have produced no realistic management plan for these vehicles, saying they will sort it out after consent. If it were that simple, why haven't they done it by now?

It is also unacceptable to use the western compound as the only holding bay. Whilst it might control traffic movements to Kent Street, how can it possibly be effective in managing traffic to the compounds themselves? It proved very necessary for the much smaller Rampion 1 and in a less congested part of the road.

There are still far too many discrepancies between the various documents about traffic. It is impossible to properly assess their figures or the basis on which they have been produced. They seem very low compared to the far smaller Rampion 1.

Kent Street

In July 2021, [REDACTED] from Rampion wrote to a resident *"Initial approaches have been made to West Sussex County Council. 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 ..."* This is what they consistently said during almost all of the consultation. And yet they now realise the extent to which they will *have* to use Kent Street to reach the haul road and cable route. In the June 2023 'Consultation' meeting with Cowfold residents, they were even talking about access down there to bypass the Cowfold AQMA, not realising the Cowfold Stream would be in their path.

They clearly have not thought their Kent Street plans through, as at each deadline, they produce more and more information about how they will manage the construction traffic on this very small lane. The truth is that they cannot easily do this: it is too small. The removal of hedges, trees and verges to get adequate visibility splays, access for the huge vehicles and the passing places mean that the destruction and industrialisation of this very rural lane will permanently transform it and will make screening of the substation impossible.

Rampion's rough diagrams for the passing places do not seem wide enough-in fact it would appear not to be possible to get the required width without further removal of trees and hedges and extending beyond the current DCO boundary. Nor do they seem, at 12.5m long, to be long enough for vehicles which could be up to 26.15m long. Please see the CowfoldvRampion deadline 6 submission for a further assessment of this.

Water neutrality

I understand water neutrality has now been scoped out of the requirements for the Rampion proposals, because they will be able to use some of HDC's quota, as they are not building as many houses as they were originally required to do. Given the new Government's stance on pushing through more housing, this does not seem to me to be a very wise move.

Also, even if this were to be permitted, they will still need tankers for the trenchless crossing drilling, so these tankers must also be included in the vehicle numbers.

Conclusion.

I am not against Green Energy, but a project such as this should honestly consider the options for the choice of substation, and I do not believe that this has been done by Rampion 2. There are other options locally which would have substantially less impact on the traffic, the rural nature of the area and the local economy. These factors do not appear to have been considered in the site assessment. The choice of Oakendene for the substation will devastate a beautiful rural area which has largely been undisturbed for many years, whilst also substantially adding to the volume of traffic and damaging the livelihoods of those who live and work in and around Oakendene and Kent Street.

Had Rampion consulted properly in the first place and understood the constraints of the site, even if they had still selected Oakendene, they may have been able to make a better, less damaging or disruptive plan.