

**From:** [Wemyss, Steve \(Cllr\)](#)  
**To:** [Aquind Interconnector](#)  
**Cc:** [Wemyss, Steve \(Member\)](#)  
**Subject:** proposed speech to open floor on & 7 December  
**Date:** 29 November 2020 23:50:28

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Dear Sirs

I am due to speak at the open floor on the evening of 7 December in respect of the consideration of the proposed Aquind interconnector and the below is what I intend to say (subject to amendment):

My name is Steve Wemyss. I have been a Conservative Portsmouth City Councillor for over 30 years and have lived in Portsmouth since childhood. I mention party affiliation only to make you aware that the views I express are consistent across parties in this city, and in that regard I wish to object most strongly to the proposals that are being considered. I object both on my own behalf and on behalf of the residents of the ward I represent. A ward through which the proposed interconnector would pass, a ward whose residents would be seriously affected by these proposals.

You will have heard that Portsea Island is accessed from the mainland by just three roads. Even without the traffic congestion these proposals would undoubtedly cause already there are frequently queues of traffic backing up onto the motorway and main trunk road network and air quality issues that are detrimental to human life. These aren't conjecture on my part, but serious concerns by Government departments. Experience has shown that when there is an impediment on one of the arterial routes every problem is magnified. These proposals would just exacerbate those existing problems and in my view Aquind have failed to adequately address these issues. Traffic queues may be an inconvenient fact of life, but adding to those queues such they become hazardous to life either through worsening air quality or intrinsically in themselves is not acceptable.

It may not be a trunk road but Aquind have not even modelled the traffic flows along Farlington avenue and from it's junction with the B2177 and along the B2177 to the junction with the A3. Yet, as a ward councillor, I know this is a heavily used route, not least because it is used by many to access Southdowns college and because routes in and out of Portsmouth are so congested.

Neither does there seem to be any consideration to the dangers posed to primary school children by taking the route of the interconnector either immediately outside one school and within 150m of another, or within 150m of both schools on a route which services the pupils from both schools.

Neither have they taken into account the additional traffic flow which will be generated by 320 new homes to be built alongside the A2030 just outside the city boundaries. By Hampshire County Council's calculations that is likely to generate 211 school and college age children. However, given that the nearest local schools are in Portsmouth and the other nearest schools and colleges are accessed through the ward and, for many, along the proposed route of the interconnector.

The environmentally sensitive sites affected by these proposals will have been highlighted by others and in not dwelling on those matters it should not be interpreted that I make light of them. However, I do wish to highlight the impact on open space and trees and the consequences of that impact.

It is not clear exactly how many trees will be felled by the Aquind proposals but as there are only 22,000 trees in Portsmouth compared to the 267,000 in Southampton, a city of comparable population, the loss of a single tree would be unwelcome. Especially when considering the Government's declared intention to plant 11,000,000 trees by 2022, reflecting their benefits as a carbon sink and their potential to improve air quality.

As Portsmouth is the most densely populated city outside of London it has only 760ha of accessible open space, and even then a lot of that is environmentally sensitive sites not suitable or available for the likes of football or cricket. Even then the provision of 3.53ha per 1000 people is poor compared to 4.51ha/1000 people for Southampton, or 5.60ha/1000 in Plymouth, both cities of comparable population. There are only 25 publicly accessible full size football pitches and 5 publicly accessible cricket squares in Portsmouth and should this scheme progress at best there would be a 20% loss of pitches for at least one season and in some

instances two seasons. In the worst case it could be as high as 33% loss of provision. The prospect goes beyond the loss of one, or two, seasons however. As an ex-Sunday league player, I know that once a team is unable to participate for even a short period the likelihood is that team will not play as a team again. Certainly they would forfeit their place in their leagues because of being unable to fulfil their fixtures. The impact of that would be, in many instances, individuals would cease to participate in sport to the detriment of their health.

Finally, there is a precedence for refusing these proposals. In May 1994 the Secretary of State called in a planning application by Portsmouth Football Club for the use of Farlington playing fields as a departure from the local plan. One of the reasons for refusal was the adverse effect on nature conservation. This was because Brent Geese, a protected bird, winter on Farlington playing fields (they also winter on some of the other sites Aquind propose using). Another reason was inadequate re-provision of pitches.

In summary, I have sought to demonstrate that while the Aquind proposals may inflict a temporary inconvenience they have the potential to inflict long term harm. That harm could come through damage to the environment. That harm could come through the danger posed by the route of the interconnector passing either in front of primary school or passing within 150m of two primary schools and obviously en-route to and from those schools. The danger may come in terms of suddenly stationary traffic on major roads. The harm may come in the health consequences of residents damaged by the air quality, or it may arise because of the earlier than might have been expected onset of a sedentary life style.

Steve Wemyss

Portsmouth City Councillor for Drayton and Farlington

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