

THE COLLECTIVE OF PARISH COUNCILS AGAINST THE WEST MIDLANDS INTERCHANGE (WMI)

KEY POINTS RAISED DURING PRELIMINARY MEETING – 27TH FEBRUARY, 2019

STRATEGIC AND LOCAL HIGHWAY MATTERS

Grave concerns remain regarding the traffic impacts of the proposal upon the locality and the strategic highway network. The A449 is frequently (ExQ 1 – 1.7.6. noted) impacted by closure of the M6 leading to congestion and emissions to the detriment of living conditions in the locality. The additional vehicles generated by the WMI will exacerbate the situation.

There are, at present, issues for vehicles travelling north and wishing to exit at Junction 12 because of the close proximity of Junction 11 and the merging of the Toll Road. The M54/M6 link joining junction 11; HS2 construction traffic and traffic that will be generated by the new retail outlet in Cannock together with that generated by the WMI will inevitably exacerbate this and create more potential for accidents and M6 closures to the detriment of living conditions in the locality.

Another factor is the location of the HGV fuelling station (M6 Diesel) on the A460 less than 1km south of Junction 11. This will inevitably attract HGV vehicles generated by this proposal and add to the traffic volumes using the A460 and possibly other local roads as vehicles seek out the proposed interchange.

It does not appear that these cumulative effects have been considered by the applicant.

The Collective asks that the Inspector travels local roads to see their characteristics and unsuitability to accommodate employees rat running the narrow country lanes to access the site. A suggested route will be provided.

VISUAL IMPACT

The Collective asks that the Inspector views the site from Shoal Hill Toposcope and from the rear of St Mary's Church in Shareshill. A plan of these locations will also be provided.

LIGHT POLLUTION

The Collective asks that the Inspector visits the locality during the hours of darkness and, in particular, views the recent Bericote development to evaluate the impact that this relatively modest development has had upon the locality. The light pollution can be seen from a considerable distance but the Inspector is specifically asked to view the development at the junction of Straight Mile and Vicarage Road. This urbanising effect on the Green Belt will inevitably be exacerbated by the WMI when its relative scale is considered.

Also the light pollution from the Toposcope on Shoal Hill Common; there is no light pollution for miles towards long distance views concluding at Clee Hills Near Ludlow. Accordingly, the Collective requests that the Inspector visits the Toposcope on Shoal Hill Common to assess the height and scale of the development when set against the existing County Waste Incinerator.

PARKING

A dedicated and free parking area for overnight accommodation of HGVs. is an absolute necessity to try to minimise the problem of fly parking. Inappropriate parking in the surrounding locality is already a problem in the locality. It is currently not clear what is proposed by the applicant in this regard.

ECOLOGY

The destruction of existing habitats affecting protected and other species is an inevitable consequence of this proposal. It cannot be acceptable that appropriate significant mitigation is only to be provided as the overall development is completed. Just to provide bat boxes around the warehousing is not acceptable. Bats need to forage locally and the Country Park is not being provided until the final phase of the development, after 2030. The design of the site is unacceptable without green spaces for species to survive.

PHASING OF THE DEVELOPMENT

The scale of the WMI as proposed is almost incomprehensible in this Green Belt location. We are being asked to accept the totality of the proposal without any opportunity to review its impact as it develops.

The applicant compares the WMI to the DIRFT. This was constructed in several phases, each with its own individual planning consent. It would be far more sensible to allow time to assess the impact as the development evolves for this application too.

It is also considered that the rail connection is the only real justification that could possibly override the harm to the Green Belt arising from the WMI. Warehousing alone could not override the harm. A legal commitment to provide the rail connection and related to the phasing and use of the proposed buildings is absolutely necessary if the WMI is to proceed. Without this it is considered that public confidence in national and local Green Belt Policy will be fundamentally eroded.

STERILISATION OF MINERALS BENEATH THE SITE

Our concerns regarding the above remain.

JUSTIFICATION

The applicant has stated that only 60% of the site will be used by the West Midlands (WMI); the other 40% will come from all over the country encouraging companies to relocate to take advantage of the larger warehouses, not the rail connection. Some of these companies may well have SRFIs closer to them already, or may have one proposed for the future. Policy states that we should not encourage the need to travel and displace employment from other areas. The Collective, therefore, questions the need for the 300 hectares of warehousing in the Green Belt; the site does not have an international airport, unlike Doncaster and East Midlands.