

Mr John Gerring
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Our ref: P18-587-L04v1
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By email only: J.Gerring@sstaffs.gov.uk

Dear John,

**Re: West Midlands Interchange, Four Ashes :
Comments on Inspection of WMI Noise Study Area**

I am writing with comments following our inspection of the noise study area re. the proposed West Midlands Interchange development.

Following issue of the Hepworth Acoustics Ltd desktop review of the noise chapter (and addendum) of the Environmental Statement on behalf of the Council, an inspection of noise-sensitive areas was made on 21 January 2019 by John Gerring and Wendy Green of South Staffordshire Council and Paul Bassett of Hepworth Acoustics Ltd.

We stopped off at, and walked around, key areas. At each location we noted the character of the noise environment and referred on site to relevant plans of the proposed WMI development, bunding proposals, noise calculation points, etc. Where relevant, we noted orientation of rear gardens. Our notes and comments are set out below, some of which may be worthy of further investigation or taking up with the developer's noise consultant.

Inspection Notes and Comments

We started our observations at properties located to the west of the proposed development. These included properties on the west side of the A449 (including The Smallholding, Hollybyre, Evergreen and Homestead which appeared to have their rear gardens behind the properties, and Marsh Farm further to the north which is set back further away from the A449. It was noted that bunding of 4.5m-6m in height is to be installed on the east side of the A449 to screen these properties from noise from the vehicle handling area of Zone A2 of the proposed development.

Observations were then made from a group of dwellings at Crateford Lane. These properties include the park homes at Swallow Field Park. The park homes do not have gardens as such but most do have small patios/sitting out areas, so potential external noise impact is an issue, not just internal noise. Other properties included The Swallows Bungalow, the two cottages (219 & 221), Crateford House and Woodland Cottage. Being set back away from the A449 it was noted that the background noise climate in this area was low. The low level of background noise was picked up by the Baseline Noise Survey that was undertaken on behalf of the developer that was carried out at Location N10. The potential noise impact in this area was discussed in our review report.

We also viewed the development site from the new Four Ashes Park. It was noted from the drawings that the existing house next the canal is to be assimilated into the proposed development for use as offices/welfare facilities.

We then viewed the development site from Station Drive and noted the houses and bungalows in Station Drive on the west side of the railway which have rear gardens facing the direction of the southern end of Zone A1. It was noted that bunding of 6m height is proposed immediately adjoining the southernmost building/yards and that a further 8m high bund (and acoustic fencing) is proposed nearer to the southern boundary of the development site. The proximity of the railway and the industrial nature of the land use on the east side of the railway was noted.

It was noted that the only dwelling in Vicarage Road, west of the junction with Straight Mile, is Wood View. This property will be on the other side of the road from Zone A6 of the proposed development. A 3m high bund is proposed to screen the HGV yard, which is not as high as in some other areas. Given that Wood View is predicted in the Environmental Statement to have a BS4142 Rating Level of +8 dB(A) above the background noise, raising the height of the proposed 3m barrier may be beneficial for this property.

At the west end of Straight Mile there are some dwellings - Mile End Cottage, Stoney Brook, Ash House (and bungalow to rear accessed off Vicarage Road) which do not appear on the development drawing. Presumably these dwellings will be cleared as part of the development.

Further east along Straight Mile are dwellings at Straight Mile Farm, Meadow View and High Clere all of which have been taken account in the noise impact assessment. Noise bunds of 4m-4.5m are proposed for the proposed nearest development industrial zones (Zones A7b & A7c).

The next dwellings further east are located at the junction of Straight Mile with Kings Road, which were included in the noise impact assessment. These dwellings are some 375m away from the nearest proposed warehouses buildings to the north-west.

There are no dwellings to the east in Woodlands Lane. The nearest dwellings to the east in Stable Lane, generally on the eastern side. These properties include Woodlands Farm, Cobweb Cottage, The Haven, Elmhurst, Oak Cottage, Elmsmead, Allspan Cottage, Avery Bungalow. Adequate assessment locations were used for these properties in the noise impact assessment. It was noted that the background noise climate in Woodlands Lane is influenced by traffic noise from the M6 motorway to the east.

It was noted that the nearest dwellings to the north-east of the proposed development are Avenue Cottages which are accessed off the A5. These properties were included in the noise impact assessment. It was noted that screening bunding of 7m-8m in height is proposed for the northern side of Zone A4a of the development. This bunding will also benefit dwellings on the north side of the A5.

Finally, an inspection was made of the residential area of Croft Lane. This area falls between the proposed development Zone A3 to the west and Zone A4a to the east. The southernmost property next to the canal is Selwyn Green. Other properties nearby include Oak View, The Bungalow, Perinthorpe, Angalia, Allendale, and The Cottage, with housing association properties to the south-west. To the west is Gailey House (we understand that the property further to the west is to be cleared as part of the development). Many of these dwellings are located away from the A5 such that the background noise climate is low. Some properties face east across the canal. The development proposal to the east shown in the masterplan layout includes a main access road from the A5, car parking and the HGV yard on the west side of building 4010. It was noted that Drawing No. 4049-1050-05 shows proposed bunding to the west of the access road but this varies in height from 8m in the north to 6m in the south, with a minimum of 3.5m in the central area. Thus, the proposed noise bund appears to be at its lowest where the majority of houses in Croft Lane are located. Given that most

properties in Croft Lane are predicted in the Environmental Statement to have a BS4142 Rating Level of around +10 dB(A) above the background noise, raising the height of the central area of the bund may be beneficial.

Whilst it was noted that, in the northernmost canal area next to Croft Lane, the boat yard and moorings are not used for overnight stays, there appeared to be narrow boats moored up further south which may be used overnight.

Other Matters

After the site inspection Hepworth Acoustics were asked to comment on the EHO's observation that properties to the south-east of the proposed WMI development (i.e. in Stable Lane) are forecast in the Environmental Statement to have a BS4142 Ratings Level of below the background noise, whilst properties to the north-west (some of which are on the other side of the A5) are predicted to be around +10 dB(A). We have therefore interrogated the noise chapter of the Environmental Assessment to investigate this matter.

The low predicted operational noise impact for dwellings in Stable Lane is due to a number of factors. Firstly, the representative daytime background noise climate was found to be 46 dB L_{A90} (at Locations N8 & N9) presumably due to the distant sound of traffic from the motorway. Secondly, substantial noise bunds of up to 6m in height are proposed to the east of the nearest building (Building 5020). Thirdly, and most importantly, the illustrative masterplan shows that there will be no HGV activity on the east side of the nearest warehouse (Building 5020), all HGV activity will take place on the far (west) side of the building. On this basis the calculated daytime specific noise levels are understandably low – being within the range of 34 to 37 dB L_{Aeq} for properties in Stable Lane. Thus, adding the acoustic character corrections of between 6 – 9 dB(A), gives BS4142 rating levels of between 40 – 46 dB L_{Ar} which do not exceed, and are mostly below, the background noise level. However, it is stated in para. 13.245 of the original noise chapter in the Environmental Statement that as the masterplan is only illustrative, for calculation/assessment purposes the noise consultant has assumed that the HGV service yard would be on the south-east side of the building. If this is the case it is not clear why the predicted specific noise levels in Stable Lane are so low. It may be worth seeking clarification on this matter with the developer's noise consultant.

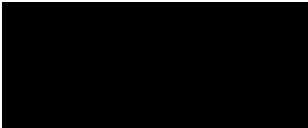
The predicted noise impact is higher at properties to the north-west such as at Roundabout Cottages, School House, Chase View, Denson House, Longfield, Hamerton House, and Wharf House. At these sample properties near to the A5 the daytime BS4142 Rating Levels are predicted in the Environmental Statement to be between 8 and 12 dB above the background noise. The main factor here appears to be that the representative daytime background noise level that has been used for all these properties is low at 41 dB L_{A90} . This figure is a conservative value obtained from data taken at baseline noise survey location N7. Figure 13A.1 indicates that N7 was located well to the south of the A5 next to the Staffordshire CC depot i.e. further away from the A5 than the assessment properties are. Moreover, acoustic screening provided by buildings on the SCC depot may have resulted in a reduced angle of view towards the A5 from the sound level meter, thus further reducing the contribution of traffic noise from the A5. One would expect properties fronting on to, or very near to, the A5 to have daytime background levels higher than 41 dB L_{A90} . (If considered useful by the Council, this could be checked by carrying out a brief background noise survey during an off-peak period at a location more representative of the properties that are near to the A5).

Whilst using a low background noise value makes for a conservative (and thus robust) assessment, it can result in overstating the potential noise impact and that appears to be what has occurred here.

We have also considered the predicted operational noise levels for these properties near the A5. The calculated noise levels in the noise chapter take into account that HGV activity will take place in the northern areas of the nearest parts of the development (Zones A2 and A3). We note that 6m high bunds are proposed

for the north of both A2 and A3, with acoustic fencing infill for the constricted north-west area of A3. Obviously there has to be a gap in the acoustic screening between A2 and A3 where the railway passes between them. The calculated daytime specific noise levels for the A5 properties are fairly modest at 41 – 43 dB L_{Aeq} . However, because acoustic feature corrections of 6-9 dB(A) have been applied, the resulting BS4142 Rating Levels are 49 – 53 dB L_{Ar} which are between 8 and 12 dB above the adopted low background noise of 41 dB(A).

Yours sincerely,
For Hepworth Acoustics Ltd



Paul Bassett BSc MSc FIOA
Technical Director