

Ian Bull Consultancy Ltd
Chartered Town Planners & Development
Consultants
1 Mountbatten Way
Brabourne Lees
Ashford, Kent TN25 6PZ
Email: ian@ianbullconsultancy.co.uk
Tel: 01303 814153
Mob: 07738 584 221

IDB/TK

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M20 Lorry Area, Highways England,
Bridge House,
1 Walnut Tree Close, Guildford,
Surrey, GU1 4LZ

By email only
(m20lorryarea@highwaysengland.co.uk)

Dear Sir,

M20 Lorry Park Consultation.

This letter is submitted in response to the consultation by Highways England in respect of the creation of a new lorry park to address problems arising from Operation Stack on the M20.

Both Stanford and Stowting Parish Councils, Monks Horton Parish Meeting and the Sellindge and District Residents Association recognise the problems caused by Operation Stack and reluctantly acknowledge that the creation of a lorry park (or parks) could contribute to some mitigation of the extent and impact of Operation Stack when implemented: they also consider the inclusion of overnight lorry parking facilities conveys a wider range of local impacts that would occur on a daily basis.

However, it is submitted that neither of the sites proposed are acceptable, as a result of their impact on residential amenity from noise and air quality, impact on local roads, visual impact and non-compliance with highway safety standards. Furthermore it is submitted that an alternative solution could address these concerns and deliver operational benefits and achieve a superior solution to benefit residents, visual impact, amenity and freight operators.

This submission is supported by a technical paper (attached), prepared by Peter Brett Associates. The alternative prepared is supported by the Parish Councils, Parish Meeting and Residents Association in the event that the consultation concludes that Lorry Parks must be used to

provide a "stand alone" solution to the Operation Stack rather than a strategic solution incorporating a range of improvements to the UK's freight transport infrastructure. They support the use of a dispersed network of smaller lorry parks to deliver a solution in conjunction with a fully developed strategic solution delivering a range of improvements to the UK's freight transport infrastructure.

Notwithstanding their overarching views, the alternative sites proposed are well related to both the M20, A2 and the existing Channel Tunnel and Port facilities. It will represent a superior solution compared to those proposed by Highways England in terms of operational capability, visual impact, impact on residential amenity and compliance with highway standards.

Although it is accepted that the alternative solution proposed necessitates development within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the planning policy tests set out in the NPPF relating to development in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) confirm that the case for the development proposed can be considered as "exceptional circumstances" and therefore any AONB issue may be set aside.

The guidance is set out in paragraphs 115 and 116 of the NPPF and relates to National Parks, the Broads and AONBs which "have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty". Whilst the wildlife conservation and cultural heritage issues are stated to be "important" in all these areas, "great weight" only applies in National Parks and the Broads.

Where development is proposed in an AONB, it will only be permitted in "exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that they are in the public interest" (para 116). It is submitted that the Kent wide problems caused by Operation Stack elevate the issue of finding new lorry parks to the point where it clearly meets the requirement of being in the 'public interest'.

Once it is accepted that a development is in the public interest, the proposal will need to be assessed against three criteria;

- "the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy". The Government view, as set out in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, recognises that the current problems caused by Operation Stack are not acceptable and are harming both the regional and national economy. It was for this reason that, exceptionally, the Chancellor has made £250m available to resolve the issue. On this basis, the first criterion is met,
- "the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way". The locational

requirements of new lorry parks to serve Operation Stack are very specific which mean that sub optional solutions (or solutions which do not have local support) outside the AONB should not be pursued,

- "any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated". Clearly, any proposal will need to demonstrate appropriate mitigation.

In light of the preceding comments, development in the AONB may be permitted in "exceptional circumstances". It is my view that the combination of national economic considerations and the specific locational requirements of Operation Stack are exceptional and that a case can be made for permitting a new lorry park in the AONB.

The solution proposed by Peter Brett Associates comprises a scheme which is both environmentally and operationally, superior to either of the two options put forward by Highways England. It is a "deliverable" solution which maximises the benefit of the government funding and addresses the adverse impacts of operation stack and creates a facility which will provide long term improvements to the operation of the freight industry and, in turn, the UK economy.

I trust that the above is self explanatory but should wish to discuss any aspect further, please do not hesitate to contact me. Please confirm receipt of these representations and keep me advised of progress.

Yours faithfully,

Ian D Bull BTP, DMS, MRTPI.
Chartered Town Planner and Development Consultant
For Ian Bull Consultancy Ltd