

## **Managing Freight Vehicles Through Kent Response to second public consultation by Graham Horner**

### **1. Do you have any comments on the indicative layout of the lorry area?**

The indicative layout presented in the consultation document appears to have been deliberately simplified and the only comment that can be made on that is that the layout must be very inefficient owing to the way it has been cynically shaped around existing properties and other features. It must be unique amongst major transportation facilities in this respect.

My more detailed comments are based on Figure 1.2 of the Environmental Report which, although different from the design shown in the consultation document, does show the intention in more detail.

Any layout must be based on the anticipated traffic flows. We have not been provided with the traffic modelling, although I have requested it, but some principal numbers are given in the Environmental Report so I have used those, together with the descriptions of operation given in the AQ and Noise chapters.

I believe the traffic figures have been underestimated. This impacts the conclusions in the Environmental Report and also affects the sizing of various facilities such as the number of proposed control booths. In short:

- the design is based on an average daily throughput of 4695 vehicles (including local vehicles not destined for the two ports). This contrasts with the current reported throughput of 5400 vehicles through the ports.
- there seems to be no allowance for the variation in the traffic flows on a seasonal, daily and hourly basis.
- there is no consideration of growth in traffic numbers from the opening year in the Noise chapter of the Environmental Report.

The layout does not seem to allow some of the movements described in the operational descriptions in the Environmental Report. For further details on traffic see my answer to 4a below.

There does not appear to be any provision for access to the site other than through control booths on each side of the motorway. How will service vehicles and emergency vehicles access the parks when there are queues at the entrances (ie whenever the parks are being used)?

Departures from the northern area are likely to be noisier and to generate more fumes than arrivals as the flow rates will be higher and speeds will probably be higher. It appears all departures will be routed via the northern and eastern boundaries of the site, closest to most residents. Is that a good choice?

### **2. Do you have any comments on the environmental impact of the proposals?**

It appears that the site boundaries have been moved since the start of the environmental studies. There are a number of places in the text and drawings which reflect a site envelope similar to the one published by SDC in December last year. How can we be sure all the numbers have been updated to reflect the latest layouts?

The assumption in the environmental studies is that the lorry area will not be used for, or to supplement, Dover TAP. How can we be sure this will always be the case? What exactly will be the trigger when an event which has lorries queueing as far as Court Wood, or Roundhill, suddenly becomes a Stack event, and is this trigger more likely to be pulled if a new facility and staff are available to handle it? How long will it be before the 8 events per year becomes 10 or 20?

Your report finds significant adverse environmental effects in many of the subjects covered. Broadly, this confirms with a great deal of study what has been obvious from the start – that the proposal is a blot on the landscape and a major infringement of residents' right to peaceful enjoyment of their property. In a planning context, the identified harm would never be acceptable other than in the most exceptional circumstances. It would only be permitted if balanced by a demonstrable public good. Whilst it may alleviate frustrations for road users in Kent for the few days of the year on which Operation Stack has historically been in force, I note that no net economic benefit to the country has been demonstrated for the capital and operating cost needed. If this were a planning application, it would be thrown out and our district councillors have confirmed this.

I comment below on some aspects of the report where I believe you have underestimated the impact of your proposals or not provided enough information.

## **Air Quality**

As noted above, use of the modelling output from Junction 10a studies does not reflect the case where port traffic is instructed to use the M20/A20 route, as it would be for Operation Stack. Port of Dover have estimated that 30-40% of their traffic arrives via the Jubilee Way in normal conditions. When the lorry area is brought into use, this traffic would be diverted to the M20 at Dartford or, by your assumptions, turned around at Dover. All of the 5,400 vehicle average daily flow should be assumed to arrive, somehow, at the lorry park.

In addition to this, there appear to be several anomalies in Table 5.3 of the Appendices. Link 11 seems to be the main eastbound carriageway of the M20, from Figure 5.1. The total flow of 4698 HDV in the Do-minimum case would, as I understand it, be divided 67% to link 28 and 33% remaining on link 11 for Do-something (Op Stack). The remaining traffic on the motorway would be limited to 40mph per 5.5.20. The figures in Table 5.3 do not reflect this – the percentage HDV appears way too low. It is also not clear why the traffic composition in the morning peak should be different from the other periods of the day.

It is not clear how hourly flows have been applied to links within the lorry area for the calculation of the hourly pollutant concentrations. Each 'Operation Stack' event can be expected to conclude with a period of several hours with traffic leaving the park at the maximum flow rate (?800/hr) while newly arriving lorries are still being routed through the control booths (in order to preserve the queue discipline – see comments on traffic management below). The daily flow at links 25 and 26 will inevitably be higher than the average daily port-bound flow of 5400 vehicles as the queue is drawn down and the hourly flows may be much higher than implied by the numbers in Table 5.3.

Your assumption that increases in traffic flow in future will be completely mitigated by improvements in engine technology needs numbers to support it. I also understand that there is scant evidence for pollution levels falling in line with toughening standards.

It is not immediately obvious that the assumption of only 67% of lorries entering direct from the M20 is the worst case. Have any sensitivity tests been done, say, for all lorries entering from the west?

At 5.5.6, the potential for adverse impacts on an hourly basis is dismissed with no supporting figures. Has any sort of numerical check been done to justify this? The screening method in the DMRB (HD47/08) would seem to be appropriate, if not mandatory. Similarly for particulates at 5.5.7.

## **Cultural Heritage**

This section concentrates quite rightly on Westenhanger Castle but demonstrates a very limited interpretation of 'setting' and says very little about undesignated historic buildings.

Recent planning decisions have confirmed that the definition of setting 'the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced' is being interpreted widely, and that harm to the setting of undesignated historic buildings is a material consideration of some importance. It would be quite wrong to suppose that erecting a bund and/or planting trees to limit intervisibility of a heritage asset and the lorry park can mitigate the harm to significance of an asset. In rejecting the appeal at 'Waterside Park' near Maidstone (APP/U2235/A/14/2224036) the inspector considered the harm to the setting of a Grade I listed building much more remote from the site than Westenhanger Castle is to this development and the harm to the significance of undesignated buildings close to the site. Both were found to be unacceptable. Similarly, the inspector's decision on a solar farm development at Pluckley (APP/E2205/A/14/2215733) is directly relevant to the considerable harm the lorry park will do to the setting of the Stanford Mill, Gibbins Brook Farm and the other historic buildings which border the site.

The Kent Historic Buildings Committee wrote in response to your first consultation mentioning a number of historic buildings in the area of the site which do not appear to have been taken into account in your study. One of these is my own house, Kennett House, which appears in both the Andrews map of 1769 and the Mudge Map of 1801 and which was on the local list when it existed. The harm to setting of my house and the others at Gibbins Brook which appear on these maps would be substantial and should be included in your assessment.

I would also draw your attention to the need to consider the cumulative impact of your proposals, and not just the impact on each heritage asset individually. Historic England's latest guidance on this needs to be read in the context of the definition of cumulative impact from the 2011 version:

"Cumulative impacts affecting the setting of a heritage asset can derive from the combination of different environmental impacts (such as visual intrusion, noise, dust and vibration) arising from a single development or from the overall effect of a series of discrete developments (CLG 2006). In the latter case, the cumulative visual impact

may be the result of different developments within a single view, the effect of developments seen when looking in different directions from a single viewpoint, or the sequential viewing of several developments when moving through the settings of one or more heritage assets. Some cumulative impacts may also have a greater combined effect than the sum of their individual effects, sometimes termed a 'synergistic effect' (ODPM et al 2005, 78)."

Maidstone Borough Council took note of this in rejecting a recent proposal for a solar farm, despite few of the historic buildings affected being directly intervisible with the project site. (MA/15/505974)

## **Landscape**

Whilst I'm not a landscape architect, the description of the impacts the lorry park will have on the countryside in general and individual receptors seems very understated. In particular, the idea that the magnitude of change on the immediate surrounding area can be described as 'moderate' (7.9.28) beggars belief. It will be impossible to hide much of the park and to disguise the fact that the mitigation measures are a man-made, artificial construction. One need only look at the 'screening' from the motorway provided at Stone Farm and nearby properties near Beachborough to see the very unsatisfactory effect. The introduction of 63ha of concrete, buildings, bridges and associated lighting into the amphitheatre formed by the North Downs and the Aldington Ridge cannot but have a Major Adverse impact on its immediate surroundings.

According to Shepway District Council's website the land immediately to the north of Kennett Lane is designated a Special Landscape Area. I couldn't find any reference to that in your assessment.

At 7.7.22 you mention that lighting on the M20 is limited to Junction 11 and the Stop24 Service Area. You have not yet set out proposals for the managed motorway section of the M20 but you may well decide that it can only be made safe if road lighting is added for the entire stretch that will be subject to variable speed limits. It is essential that full details of these alterations to the motorway are set out now so that the full effect can be considered before the project goes ahead.

I asked at one of the public exhibitions whether the surface levels for the lorry parks had been decided and it seemed they had not. The heights of the proposed bunds and planting similarly do seem to be defined, yet. I do not understand how anyone can make a proper assessment of the residual impacts of the project without these details being available.

You have characterised the visual impact from viewpoints VP9, 10, 11 and 13 as 'moderate adverse', reducing to 'slight adverse' by year 15. I think this grossly underestimates the effects on users of the iconic North Downs Way. The lorry park will be very visible, especially in winter and especially in twilight with its lighting, from nearly all of this designated route from Farthing Common to Tolsford Hill. Again, if additional lighting on the motorway is found necessary as a result of this project then the extent should be defined now so that the effect can be considered together with the lorry park lighting.

At 7.7.10 you state that the Sellindge LCA as having 'very limited potential for natural

habitats'. Then at 7.9.18 you note a 'loss of small areas of woodland and scrub'. The area around the Hayton Stream has been jealously protected by its owner as a nature reserve for many years and it appears about half of it will be lost. It is by no means 'small' in the light of the lack of natural habitats in the area and should be preserved. The proposed mitigation planting, as noted above, will look contrived and will be no proper substitute for this mature wood. Doubtless further tree felling will be envisaged should you buy Holmdean and Gibbins Brook properties. This would be a major loss to the immediate area and views from the hills north and south which cannot be mitigated.

There is no consideration in this section of views from the motorway. For much of the way from Ashford to Folkestone, views to the north are obscured by cutting and/or noise barriers. If this project goes ahead, travellers could have no view of the Downs at all between the urban areas of Ashford and Folkestone, but for a short stretch near Smeeth. The effect on Kent's attractiveness to visitors should be considered.

You have chosen two viewpoints on the A20, which is relatively low-lying here. Why have you not assessed the impact from viewpoints higher up the hill, particularly in view of the intention to develop that area as a new town?

PRoW HE263 is a popular route for local residents. The view from the part between Hayton Cottage and the Drum stands to be significantly impacted by the lorry park and should be considered in your assessment.

Table 7.10 equates number of visual receptors to number of viewpoints. Surely the number of people affected as represented by each viewpoint is a better and correct measure of impact.

I have no comments on the Nature Conservation chapter.

I have no comments on Chapters 8 and 9 except to note that Appendix 9.2 contains many inaccuracies and is based on a smaller site than is currently proposed.

## **Materials**

The quantities in Table 10.4 appear to be based on asphaltic surfacing throughout. Elsewhere in the EAR (2.3.7), we are told it will be all concrete and I was told at one of the public exhibitions that the northern part will be concrete and the southern part 'tarmac'. The choice of (rolled) concrete seems to be based on the political decision to build as quickly as possible. Other more environmentally friendly, less visually intrusive and perhaps quieter surfaces should not be ruled out just because of this misguided haste.

## **Noise**

The same as for air quality, this part needs a review of traffic numbers and a sensitivity test on the proportion of port-bound traffic entering from east and west.

While it is sensible that 'short-term' criteria are used to assess the impact of the Operation Stack operating case, that should not mean short-term traffic flows (opening year) should be used. Traffic numbers should be scaled to a design year in the future, noting that informed estimates are for a doubling of port traffic in the next

10-15 years.

The method of traffic management here differs from that in Chapter 5 as to how vehicles will be moving across the proposed bridge between north and south, eg in the Technical Appendix 1.2.4 'a proportion of lorries ... proceed to ... the south ... via the new bridge'. How many and why? The bridge, with its gradients and height will be a major source of noise and needs to be modelled realistically.

In 1.2.4 of the Appendix and Table 1.1, the daytime flow rate is given as 264 per hour. I believe the figure should be about 334/hr. At night, the AAWT should be about 143/hr. Both of these figures are for port traffic only for present-day conditions (ie based on average daily throughput of 5,400 lorries.) See derivation of these numbers under 4a below.

In conversation with MMJV staff at one of the public exhibitions, I was told that for daytime noise, the figures in Table 1.1 on page 4 of the Appendix were used for 17 hours and the 800 veh/hr applied for one hour. If true, this is not realistic. While the ports are congested, vehicles will be arriving at a normal rate and leaving at a reduced rate. Once the blockage clears, vehicles may still be arriving at a normal rate while the ports will be loading as fast as possible for several hours, not just one hour. At 800/hr, if achievable, the park could take  $3600/(800-334) =$  nearly 8 hours to empty and even at night will take at least  $3600/(800-143) = 5\frac{1}{2}$  hours. Noise levels over the 6hr night-time period in that case could be an order of magnitude ( $\sim 800/52$ ) more than you have estimated.

It is disappointing that you do not have a better idea of the character of the noises generated in a lorry park versus normal roads (11.5.3). For this unprecedented facility, and with noise being a major environmental factor, you should be making measurements at existing lorry parks for verification of your models. I note also that WYG (for Shepway District Council) have suggested assessment of  $L_{max}$  for this type of noise.

In Table 11.2, Holmdene is listed as 100m from the site boundary and Stanford South as 210m. Are these figures perhaps based on an earlier version of the site plan? Is the corresponding modelling accurate?

In Figure 11.9, there is a negligible difference in noise levels shown between the baseline and the full-time parking case at properties along Kennett Lane. This is surprising as there will be more traffic and the surface between the motorway and the receptors will be less absorbant than the existing farmland. I was told the Figure did not represent the worst case – why not?

Figure 11.13 does not include the proposed new bridge. Is it omitted from the model?

I note that WYG have identified some measures which should be included as well as some departures from established methodology.

### **3. Do you have any comments on additional measures we could take to further mitigate the environmental impact of the proposals?**

You have not set out details of the lighting scheme but I would hope that 12m high light masts dotted all over the park can be avoided. Low-level lights could illuminate

walkways and areas around toilets. I would say that general area lighting for queueing areas would have only a marginal impact on safety and would not justify the considerable negative visual impact. Most of the motorway currently used for Operation Stack is unlit.

Similarly I would urge you to avoid overhead gantries in the park (the proposed ones on the motorway are bad enough). Perhaps drivers can be guided just by fixed road markings and variable lighting in the pavement.

Lorries passing over the proposed bridge at night will be shining their headlights directly at my house. Please consider the effect and mitigate it if necessary.

It is notable that many of the significant adverse impacts identified for the proposed lorry area derive from its huge size. For example, by collecting all lorries wishing to cross the channel in one place, the noise generated as lorries are released to the ports will be louder and will continue for longer than if lorries had been held in a series of smaller parks distributed throughout the road network as suggested by many respondents to your first consultation. There would be similar advantages for air quality. For visual intrusion, although more places would be affected, there would be more opportunities for mitigation of harm from smaller sites and many of these sites could be put in parts of the country which are less environmentally sensitive than the current proposal.

#### **4. Regarding the management of the site, do you have any comments on: a. Traffic management**

The concept of using the lorry area for Operation Stack seems simple but we have seen no evidence that the operational details have been fully thought through. In fact, operation of this park will be much more complicated than Operation Stack as it is used at present. The contention in the Options Assessment Report that this 'solution' for holding lorries is 'fully workable' and more so than Operation Stack itself has not been proved and appears highly doubtful.

The majority of Operation Stack events are short-term – many lasting from mid to late afternoon and being cleared overnight. As such, the start-up and stand-down phases of a Stack event are a significant part of the operational model and should be given more consideration in the environmental assessments.

##### **Start-up**

I understand that it takes about 3 hours from the time a decision is made to implement Operation Stack to the necessary control points being set up on M20 junctions. The lorry area will, it seems, be managed by an operating company who will have to find 2 or 3 dozen fully-trained staff at short notice, during the working day, to man the booths. The experience in January 2015 shows what can happen when staff without recent experience of a Stack event are suddenly called to manage traffic. In that case, the relevant staff were professionals with some experience of managing traffic in their day-to-day jobs yet there was unnecessary congestion owing to mistakes being made.

It seems unlikely that a three-hour start-up time can be improved upon with the proposed lorry area. What this means for the traffic congestion between J11 and the ports I couldn't say but it could quickly become unacceptable and there may then be a

temptation to divert port traffic to the lorry area before the control booths are (fully) open. It will not take long for a queue to form and it may well stretch back to the main carriageway. The entrance road as drawn has space for about 125 lorries which would fill in less than half an hour if the booths are closed. The booths would then have to work overtime to bring the queue back inside the site and I trust they have been sized appropriately. It is not clear that this rush of vehicles into the park over the early hours of a Stack event has been properly modelled.

Alternatively, it may be that to avoid these problems, 'Stack' is called at the first hint of congestion and Stanford is subjected to many more disturbances than the 8 per year used in the environmental models.

A short survey recently at the Eurotunnel entrance showed it was taking 70 seconds to process each lorry, whereas I understand a figure of 40 seconds for service time at the booths was given to an enquirer at one of the public exhibitions. Are there enough booths?

As mentioned above, it is not only queue-jumpers that will have to be accommodated by the entrance through Stop24 but also trucks legitimately using the M2/A2 route to Dover if they are re-directed to the lorry area. There is also the possibility that some drivers will just go straight to Stop24 in the hope of getting an earlier spot in the queue and in the knowledge that there are eating and other facilities on that side. Maybe more than 33% of traffic will go through Stop24.

### **'Normal' operation during a Stack event**

The situation once the park is up and running is the one which has been used for the air quality and noise assessments with mostly a steady flow of vehicles into and out of the park. This would happen if the event lasted for days and the expectation then should be that drivers will have learned the system and queue-jumping will reduce. It may not be a conservative assumption that only 67% of lorries arrive from the west. As noted above, these 'steady state' conditions may not last long or at all.

### **Stand-down**

When the ports restore full capacity, with the existing Operation Stack it is more or less a matter of releasing the queue and allowing other traffic to join at the back. With the lorry park presumably all lorries, including local trips, will have to be routed through the park in order to keep queue places for those already parked up. This discipline will be almost impossible to enforce once word is out that the ports are fully operational again. Will there just be a free for all? If not, and lorries on the motorway are somehow persuaded to route through the park, the queueing system will have to remain in place long after the ports re-open with attendant staff costs, much frustration for drivers and prolonged disturbance to residents. Could you please set out exactly how this phase of a Stack event is expected to work?

We were given conflicting accounts by different staff at the exhibitions about how lorries will be released from the park so that the eastbound off-slip at M20 Junction 11 can remain open and other traffic can safely use it for access to Stone Street and A20 to Hythe. Non-interference with M20 traffic is a design requirement for this project. The arrangements for Junction 11 must be set out now so everyone knows that there is a feasible solution, if indeed one exists.



It is not clear from the documents how lorries arriving via Stop24 in a Stack event will be handled. I was told they will park on the south side of the motorway and be released direct to the M20 at the appropriate times. The south side park is not, however, set out for a queueing situation.

If 33% of lorries enter the south park, and there are only 500 spaces there, some will have to go directly to the north side to be queued. The layout shown in Figure 1.2 does not seem to allow this movement, at least not without this traffic having to cross lines of lorries being released from the northern lanes.

I noted above that the traffic flows you have used are too low, even for the opening year. The figure for port throughput of 5,400 freight vehicles a day, each way, has been widely reported. This is an average over the year. In work done for Port of Dover some years ago, we found very little seasonal variation month by month, but more freight travelled mid-week than at weekends. Flows on Wednesdays were 30% higher than the average for any week. Hourly flows for outbound freight were highest in the afternoons 14:00-18:00 and almost as high 18:00-22:00. I doubt these patterns have changed much since. I have used figures I have on file to derive the numbers for day-time and night-time AAWT above. I recall Halcrow did a similar analysis for the Dover Port Master Plan. Perhaps Port of Dover and Eurotunnel have better numbers for these peaking factors.

## **b. Security**

Stanford and Sellindge residents are rightly concerned about the dangers of 4000 people crowded into a place with nothing to do. It will be bad enough for 8 days a year, but all-year-round overnight parking must not be allowed to spill over onto the north side of the motorway.

The perimeter fencing must not give the impression Stanford is next to a prison.

How will anti-social behaviour by the general public be prevented in the site when the PRow gates are open?

## **c. Operation of overnight parking**

With surface levels as they are at present on the southern part of the site it appears impossible to erect noise and visual barriers high enough to screen the park effectively. What exactly is proposed?

There is no detail for how pedestrian access from Stanford (North) to Westenhanger station is to be maintained. It is essential that this PRow is preserved and separated from lorry traffic to/from the southern park at all times.

## **d. Management in general?**

It is essential that a company with specific experience of managing freight facilities is selected to operate both parts of the facility, and that they are involved in the design of how it will operate and thence the physical design. There must be a clear understanding of the roles of the operator, police, Highways England, Eurotunnel, Dover Port, ferry companies and Channelports (if not the operator) in a Stack event

before the design is finalised.

**5. Do you have any comments on the facilities that should be provided at the site?**

You have suggested that 'portaloos' are provided on the northern side. This seems shortsighted. Proper facilities should be provided in sufficient number to encourage drivers to use them.

What facilities are proposed for staff of the lorry park operator and any other agencies which may have staff on site during a Stack event?

**6. Do you have any comments on how the operation of the site should be kept under review?**

Presumably the main commercial parties and public bodies will meet at least after each Stack event to assess the success of the operation. Representatives of hauliers and the local community should be involved.

It is essential that such operational environmental mitigation measures that are agreed are measurable and enforceable. They should also be reviewed from time to time by a body with the power to modify the criteria if necessary. The local community must be involved in that.

**7. Do you have any comments on our equality and diversity proposals**

No

**8. Do you have any other comments?**

The Options Assessment Report which has emerged during this consultation reveals two important criteria used in the system selection and site selection process:

- the need to have the project constructed as soon as possible (target 18 months, but with no start date specified); and
- the need for the operation of the park to be as uncomplicated as possible ('practicability').

It appears many of the questions relating to how the lorry area will be designed, built and managed remain unanswered, despite over a year of study. Some elements of the design process, such as baseline surveys, must inevitably take time but establishing an operating model should not unless, as I suspect, it is an intractable problem. What is becoming clear is that it will not be delivered in 18 months and that its operation will be far more complicated than Operation Stack itself. Your Options Assessment Report claimed the opposite.

The imposed haste on this project is purely political and is pushing the design team into some very poor decisions. There is no reason to suppose the conditions which occurred last year will ever happen again. Yes, every so often Stack becomes so intrusive as to be newsworthy but on average only once every 7 or 8 years.

The Options Assessment Report grossly overstated the necessary complexity of a

system for informing drivers and haulage firms. They only need to know their place in the queue and ETD of ferries and shuttles so that they can make their own decisions about their journey to the ports. All that is needed is a traffic information system, not a command and control system.

A good proportion of respondents to the Transport Select Committee mentioned the need for a distributed system of lorry parks throughout the country to alleviate the problems of indiscriminate parking ('fly-parking'). This issue was brought to the House of Commons just this month with general agreement that something has to be done. There is an obvious social and economic benefit that development of such lorry parks would bring. In other words, they would pay for themselves. They would also provide the hardware to allow our proposed traffic information system to run effectively. This option was not explored at all in your Options Assessment Report despite a number of respondents suggesting it.

Your options appraisal does not present the complete picture and is flawed. You should correct it and ask the Secretary of State to review the decision made by his predecessor in July.