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Our ref:
Your ref:
Date: 17 November 2021

Sent by email to: DoverIBF@wsp.com

Dear Sirs

Response from Dover District Council to the 2nd engagement exercise in respect of Special Development Order proposals to establish a border facility at the White Cliffs Business Park, Dover (to now be known as the Dover IBF)

I refer to the above requesting this Council's comments by the extended date of 17 November 2021. As you know, this Council responded both as a Local Authority and as a Local Planning Authority to the original proposals in February of this year, and I attach a copy of that response for your information as much of what was said at that time remains relevant. Given that the current proposals represent a lesser scheme this is a combined response covering all of the issues of concern to the Council. As no technical documents other than a first draft of the Transport Assessment, (which extends to 564 pages), in support of the proposals have yet been submitted, the Council reserves the right to comment further when they are.

Introduction

As before, I would like to thank you for the opportunity that you have given to Dover District Council as part of the engagement process to respond as the Local Authority and Local Planning Authority with regard to the proposal to establish an Inland Border Facility (IBF) at the White Cliffs Business Park, Dover (to now be known as the Dover IBF). The Council notes again that the government has recognised the vital role that the Short Straits crossing plays as a key UK gateway for integrated supply chains and global deep-sea air/cargo distribution hubs transiting by road between the UK and mainland Europe, and that ensuring fluidity and efficiency is crucial to this operation.

The Council in turn recognises the need to establish inland border facilities to ensure that effective border controls can be established now that the UK has left the European Union and welcomes the government's decision to make this major investment in infrastructure at the White Cliffs Business Park (WCBP) recognising the potential this offers to provide significant employment opportunities and attract further investment to the District.

The Site

The site chosen for the proposed development has been designated as employment land within the Local Plan for more than 20 years. Development at WCBP since then has taken place in phases, commencing with Phase 1 in the 1980's running through to the present day where the bulk of Phase 2 is now substantially complete.

The Council continues to see WCBP as a premier location for employment as set out in the Land Allocations Local Plan, which incorporates WCBP Phase 3, part of which is the

proposed location of the IBF. This allocation will be taken forward in the forthcoming new Local Plan for the District. As was the case with WCBP Phases 1 and Phase 2, the provision of additional infrastructure has been a key consideration in bring forward development at Phase 3. The proposal for a new access road in the form of the Homes England funded, Dover Fastrack/BRT scheme which will facilitate access to the IBF was also intended to open-up access to Phase 3.

As a local authority focused on delivering economic growth, we are keen to see the investment in this site acting as a catalyst to attract further economic investment in the locality and the remainder of Phase 3 in particular. Should the SDO be granted we will be keen to work with the relevant agencies to further develop the Construction and Operational Management Plans for the site, with the latter being vital to the continued success of the WCBP both as existing and proposed particularly in terms of traffic management issues.

We would also welcome further information about how the now surplus land, acquired by DfT to facilitate the earlier proposal, can be brought forward for early employment development.

Impacts

However, whilst recognising the economic and employment benefits that this investment brings, the Council is equally aware that the construction of this facility, albeit on land designated within the Local Plan for employment use, has inevitably raised many concerns with local residents and if not planned carefully, could adversely affect the Councils' growth plans for the regeneration of Dover and the wider District. It is therefore vital that appropriate mitigation measures are put in place to manage any adverse impacts that may potentially be caused by the Dover IBF proposals and there are four key areas of concern, on which the Council is seeking detailed discussion with the relevant government departments as follows:

1. Traffic Management and the impact on the growth agenda.

As outlined above, the proposed access to the IBF is from the A2/A256 junction and then via the existing B&Q roundabout and Section 2 of the proposed Dover Fastrack scheme. The traffic modelling within the previous Transport Assessment (TA) for the new facility made it clear that the location of the IBF would lead to a significant increase in the use of the M2/A2 corridor by HGV traffic which is currently using the M20/A20. This had the potential to create significant traffic management issues on the national and local road network and in particular to further exacerbate the existing capacity issues at both the A258/A2 Duke of York's Roundabout and the A2/A256/Sandwich Road roundabout at Whitfield which are recognised in the emerging TA.

Both this Council and Kent County Council in their role as highway authority have had serious concerns regarding the capacity issues at these two junctions for some years, recognising the limitations these constraints potentially place on the Council's plans for economic and housing growth. This is recognised in the Regulation 18 Dover District Local Plan which went out for consultation between January and March of this year.

National Highways clearly share similar concerns as evidenced by the objections they have made in response to several recent planning proposals on the grounds of the impact that such developments would potentially have on the capacity of the strategic road network (especially the Whitfield Roundabout) and their response to the first engagement and to the Local Plan.

Given this, any additional impacts on both of these junctions are of concern, especially due to the nature of such traffic serving both the IBF and the now

confirmed Dover SPS Border Control Post. In order to mitigate the additional impact that the IBF (and other related facilities) will place upon the national and local road network, and thus safeguard the Council's plans for growth, the Council would be grateful for an early meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport to discuss how plans can be brought forward as soon as possible to address the following key issues:

- The upgrading of the on and off slip roads to the A256/A2 junction to current design standards.
- Improvements being delivered to the configuration and capacity of the A258/A2 Duke of York's Roundabout to ensure that Deal bound traffic in particular is not hindered by increased traffic on the strategic road network.
- Improvements to the A2/A256/Sandwich Road roundabout at Whitfield including the introduction of a signalised junction to ensure that local traffic is not hindered by increased traffic on the strategic road network.
- The funding of high-quality signage and routing for traffic accessing the IBF within the WCBP. This issue is relevant to not only the IBF but to potential other related facilities, which we understand are to be located in the vicinity. For example, once constructed, the operation of the now confirmed Dover SPS Border Control Post which is within a very short distance, has the potential to lead to driver confusion, drivers accessing multiple sites, drivers not adhering to preferred egress routes and so on.
- Details regarding usage levels and dwell times for vehicles using the site as we have concerns now that the size of the facility has been reduced as to whether this is sufficient to deal with the numbers of vehicles using the port at peak times and whether, as a consequence, this could lead to queues of vehicles on the local road network awaiting access to the IBF or at least disrupted traffic flows due to drivers being unfamiliar with the access arrangements. In particular DDC would wish to be satisfied that the location of the initial check in will not result in queuing or that the Operational Management Plan will provide a mechanism to override this. The potential interplay between other sites especially at peak times, should also be acknowledged. It is essential to ensure that the Dover IBF and the Dover SPS Border Control Post are designed to operate in tandem, providing overflow capacity should one site be busier than the other based on evidence-based forecasts of traffic volumes. This will require closer co-operation between Defra and HMRC than we have seen to date.
- That details of traffic signage and routing controls outside the WCBP are provided with the submission of information for Relevant Approval to include real-time advance electronic directional signage showing any operational issues at the site in both directions along the A2. This is vital to keep Dover moving.

In addition to these short-term interim measures, the Council has been lobbying for many years for the dualling of the section of the A2 between Lydden and Dover. This route provides vital national resilience to the M20/A20 corridor and given that the proposed IBF will increase traffic on this route, we would reiterate once again our request that the Lydden to Dover A2 dualling scheme be included in the next Roads Investment Strategy programme. As you may know this is now a pipeline project for

RIS3 and the Council is working on options with National Highways however, even on the most optimistic case, these will not be delivered until after 2030 and therefore some interim solutions will be needed.

2. Impact on Local Residents & the Environment

Whilst this site has of course been designated as employment land within the Local Plan for more than 20 years, the Council is none the less pleased to note the efforts made within the site layout to shield the proposed development from the residential properties to the east, through the provision of buffer zones and additional planting together with the other environmental measures as set out in the Environmental Management Plan.

The Council is concerned however that these proposals have yet to be relayed in a detailed format to the residents most affected during the course of the engagement period. The Council would therefore urge that HMRC engages with the residents and provides them with responses to those issues of concern, which include the provision of a scaled layout plan of the proposed site together with details of the proposals to ensure that the environmental issues around sound, light and air pollution will be robustly addressed.

In addition, it is considered that further information and mitigation needs to be considered in the following matters:

- Additional land and landscaping to the southwest corner of the inspection building where there is a pinch-point adjoining the road is provided to reduce the dominance of this building from the road and views from the south.
- Additional landscaping to the east of the inspection building to soften/break up views from the east.
- Additional landscaping on top of the bund adjoining the welfare building and offices for the same reason.
- Additional landscaping generally, to screen the boundary fencing – planting is only shown internally which will result in a dominant appearance.
- All planting should incorporate a mix of semi-mature trees to give immediate impact and mass native woodland for longer term mitigation and evergreen species for year-round screening.
- A fully detailed proposed LED lighting scheme (including lux plot) is included with the submission for Relevant Approval, so landscape and visual impacts of the proposed IBF can be properly considered, and that no lighting is provided to the east of the developed area and no columns exceed 8m in height. The scheme should make specific reference to Institute of Lighting Engineers Guidance Document 'Guidance Note 1 for the reduction of obtrusive light 2020' whereby residential areas in Guston are considered E2 Rural Low district brightness (Sparsely inhabited rural areas, village, or relatively dark outer suburban locations). The number, height and location of lighting and intensity of illumination to be kept to the minimum operationally during the hours of darkness.
- Fast charge electric vehicle charging points are provided for the staff car parks at one for every 10 spaces & that electric hook up points are provided for refrigeration units of trucks.

- That the appearance of all buildings are agreed with the LPA before being constructed and materials of the buildings are sympathetic to and would blend into the surrounding landscape and would be least obtrusive in views across the Site and are not higher than 8m.
- That a measurable biodiversity net gain of at least 10% is achieved against the DEFRA metric.
- That further engagement with DDC on matters of noise, air quality, lighting and contaminated land is carried out before the submission for relevant approval.
- That there is meaningful engagement with DDC on the information and detail that is to be provided as a 'construction management plan', 'operational management plan' and site specific 'dust management plan' as referenced as mitigation in the earlier air quality report (WSP 70077720-AQ). This should include real-time PM10 monitoring to begin as soon as possible before the commencement of works.
- That the proposed buildings on the Site achieve at least a 31% reduction in carbon emissions below the Target Emission Rate (TER) as set out in Building Regulations Part L (2013).
- That the proposed buildings meet a BREEAM 'Very Good' standard overall, including Very Good for addressing maximum energy efficiencies under the energy credits.
- That water efficiency measures are included to achieve the relevant BREEAM water credits.
- That through consultation with KCC as Lead Local Flood Authority, the surface water drainage system includes appropriate allowances for climate change.
- Noisy works of construction should only take place during the following hours
i. 8am-6pm Monday-Friday
ii. 8am-1pm Saturday
iii. No time at all on Sundays or Public Holidays.
iv. Prior consent for works should be applied for under Section 61 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974.
- That there should be a requirement to produce a stakeholder communications plan that includes community engagement before work commences.
- That mitigation measures should include discussions with DDC to establish appropriate access and haul routes for construction traffic.
- That prior to commencement of the development a desk top study for contamination shall be undertaken and submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The study shall include the identification of previous site uses, potential contaminants that might reasonably be expected given those uses and any other relevant information. Using this information, a diagrammatical representation (Conceptual Model) for the site of all potential contaminant sources, pathways and receptors shall also be included.

- That in the event of an alternative layout being proposed for submission for SDO approval that a further period of engagement to ascertain DDC's views is agreed.
- That in the event of the proposed access arrangements being amended that any such amendments fully align with the proposed Dover Fastrack scheme or that it is clear how such an alignment will be achieved.

The construction of the IBF does affect a section of the long-distance footpath known as the North Downs Way, which it is noted is proposed to be diverted along the eastern edge of the site. The current Local Plan does in fact provide for the route of the North Downs Way to be restored to its original alignment along the Roman road and across the A2 on a new bridleway bridge to continue to Pineham when the area is developed for employment use.

Whilst the Council understands the reasons for the diversion of the footpath, there are local concerns that this diversion will become permanent and the opportunity to improve the national trail lost. We would therefore ask that should the IBF cease operation by 31 December 2025 as indicated within the SDO legislation, that the footpath be restored to its original alignment along the Roman road.

Developments such as this, will inevitably have an impact on the environment and the activities associated with its operation are potentially detrimental to the objectives contained within Council's Climate Change Strategy, prepared following the Council's agreement to declare a Climate Emergency in January 2020. The Council would ask that every effort be taken to mitigate those

3. Impact of Development on Dover Fastrack and Local Businesses

As outlined above, the proposed access to the IBF is from the existing B&Q roundabout via Section 2 of the Dover Fastrack scheme. The Dover Fastrack proposal forms part of the masterplan for the development of at c5,750 new homes, at Whitfield with a mix and quality of housing supported by the provision for a fast bus link to the town centre and rail station as integral to the development.

The Fastrack scheme has attracted significant grant support from Homes England and detailed design is well advanced with construction planned to start in 2022. The design of the scheme, which includes bus priority measures, segregated busways, and camera enforcement on sections of route, including a new bridge over the A2, had always been intended to open-up access to WCBP Phase 3. However, the volume of traffic generated by the IBF is likely to be higher than usage levels previously envisaged for this part of phase 3 and so the Council is concerned that should queues of traffic form beyond the boundaries of the site that this could adversely impact upon the operation of the Dover Fastrack Scheme and indeed on other businesses operating from White Cliffs Business Park.

We would therefore ask that every effort is made in developing the Operational Management Plan to ensure the effective operation of the IBF site access and egress arrangements and thus eliminate any risk that queues of HGVs extending outside the site obstruct the efficient operation of the Dover Fastrack scheme or queue back onto Honeywood Parkway.

4. Support for Local Economic Growth

As noted earlier, the site chosen for the proposed development has been designated as employment land within the Local Plan for more than 20 years and the Council welcomes the investment in infrastructure at the (WCBP) that the IBF proposal offers.

WCBP has been identified as a premier location for employment, as set out in the Core Strategy and Land Allocations Local Plan, and whilst the IBF brings forward some employment opportunities in the short-term, the Council is keen to see plans developed for the longer term noting that the Town and Country Planning (Border Facilities and Infrastructure) (EU Exit) (England) Special Development Order 2020, specifies that any facilities provided under this order will cease operation prior to 31 December 2025. This therefore raises questions as to the future of the site after this date and indeed the remaining land to the east, which was acquired by DfT to facilitate the earlier proposals. There appear, at this stage, to be two possible outcomes:

- i. That the site is surplus to requirements and the IBF is closed.
- ii. That continued use of the site is required and, subject to granting of planning consent, usage of the site as an IBF continues, on a permanent basis.

Given that this area of the WCBP forms a key part of the Council's allocation of employment land as set out in the Land Allocations within the current Local Plan and as a local authority focused on delivering economic growth, we welcome the investment in infrastructure, which facilitates access to the IBF and potentially the remainder of WCBP Phase 3.

We equally assume that the government would be keen to support the Council's growth agenda and we would therefore wish to engage with HMRC and the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy at the earliest opportunity to discuss future plans for the site. In particular, should operations on the site cease in 2025, as to whether ownership of the site could be transferred to Dover District Council to enable the Council to take forward plans to facilitate economic growth within the District. Alternatively, should use of the site, especially by HMRC, continue beyond 2025, then there would seem to be an opportunity to consolidate HMRC activity on this site and potentially relocate facilities currently sited elsewhere in Dover, such as those located at St. Johns Road to this site enabling land to be released for housing.

In conclusion, the Council would like to reiterate that the provision of major investment in infrastructure and early job creation in the Dover locality is to be particularly welcomed, however, without suitable mitigation of the risk of serious traffic disruption on local and strategic roads in the area the proposal would be unacceptable to residents and businesses in the District. The Council seeks early reassurance on the matters outlined above and I would welcome an early meeting with you to discuss how we can work together to take forward the points raised.

Yours faithfully,



Cllr Trevor Bartlett
Leader of the Council