

Deputation: Dr. Susie Tomson. HCC Cabinet meeting 23rd June 2008

Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen

Firstly to introduce myself

- A professional in natural resource management – With an MSc in Water and Environmental Management and a PhD in Coastal resource management.
- I work as Planning & Environmental Advisor to Royal Yachting Association. Through this role I also sit on British Marine Federation's Environment and Boating Facilities Committee.
- I am a co-opted, independent member of River Hamble Harbour Board specifically for my environmental expertise.
- I have been involved with the residents group Hamble-RAGE which is concerning itself solely with the issues of gravel extraction on the Hamble peninsular
- I have been a resident in Hamble for last 10 years and am a member of the Royal Southern Yacht Club and a keep a boat on the River.

It is with this background both personal and professional that I feel qualified to be here today and bring the following six issues to the attention of the Cabinet. But before I go into the detail – you may well expect a resident to say all this but an independent study by Adams Hendry that I was able to circulate to you all on Friday clearly backs up my deputation today as well as raising a number of other points I do not have time to address in this 8 minutes but which you should be familiar with having received the report.

My concerns to bring to HCC attention:

1. Lack of understanding of the Hamble:

- a. **Hamble village** – The village is a protected conservation area, on end of peninsula, with over 2000 residential properties, 2 schools, a health centre, 3 yacht clubs, over 200 businesses mostly in the Marine and Leisure industry.
 - i. Marina Developments Limited has £70 mln invested in their three marinas in the Hamble. Aerostructures employs over 700 people. The village of Hamble is the main access point to the River Hamble.
- b. **Hamble River** – There are over 3000 moorings on the River, and a further 500 + boats kept on the shore. Marina based businesses are estimated to contribute around £50 million per annum to the local economy and employ in excess of 3000 people.
 - i. The majority of the river users access their boats and the River through the Hamble Village. For those not familiar with moorings, marinas and boats – the Hamble River is essentially one huge caravan park where the caravans are substantially more valuable and also bring a huge amount of associated business that must be at the waterside to service and maintain them.
 - ii. The River Hamble Harbour Board discussed the Plan and agreed that the County needed to look into the issues of traffic, dust, pollution and the impact on the marine businesses from mineral development on the Airfield. Has the County done this or is there a conflict of interest being the Harbour Authority and the Minerals Planning Authority?

- c. **Hamble Lane** - There is one mode of access to the Village – the Hamble Lane. This also provides access to Woolston, Southampton, Netley and acts as the main access point to the Hamble River. The Hamble Lane is already running at overcapacity.
 - i. The County’s own Local Transport Plan clearly identifies this and has earmarked £30 million investment over the period 2011-2026 to tackle the Hamble Lane congestion.
 - ii. The current development plans for 1400 houses at the new Vosper Thorneycroft site in Woolston will only add to the congestion and certainly has not been taken into account.
 - iii. It is therefore hard to imagine that the County Council is proposing to increase the heavy commercial traffic along this already overstretched road.

2. Inconsistent site selection

- a. I agree that the South Hampshire sites that have been removed from the plan should have been removed. However, it is unclear why the Hamble Airfield has remained in suggesting it is a more sustainable option than those removed.
- b. This highlights a clear lack of consistency in site assessment which has resulted in the least sustainable option being selected – is that just my opinion? This is certainly supported by the experts Adams Hendry.
- c. The recent Traffic Assessment carried out by MOTTS Gifford clearly lacks understanding of the situation that exists along the Hamble Lane – The B3397. They state this work has been a desk based study.
 - i. Whilst I accept the data that have been collected, the assessment and conclusions are flawed as they relate solely to the percentage increase in numbers without any consideration for capacity which as I have already stated has been recognised as a major issue by Hampshire County Council.
 - ii. The original HCC site assessments disregarded the potential of moving mineral along the Hamble Lane. The site assessment for Hamble Holt stated the Hamble Lane was not an option and mineral should be removed by conveyor to Pickwell Farm and removed from there. Pickwell Farm is now ruled out on traffic and access grounds – so one would logically conclude so should the Airfield.
 - iii. Proposed access to the Airfield site crosses the pedestrian and cycle route that is used heavily for accessing the nearby school.
 - iv. On these factors alone the Hamble Airfield should be ruled out.

3. Lack of flexibility in the site assessment process

- a. This has resulted in conclusions being reached that are not truly reflective of the receiving environment. Adams Hendry identifies issues relating to assessment of the water environment, air quality, economic impacts, sensitive receptors and amenity and transport.
- b. I have already highlighted the transport issues and the omission in considering the capacity of the road network. However, had the assessment process taken existing Plans, all the background work and the comments from consultation responses into account this would not have been omitted and would have been included in the full assessment of the Hamble Airfield and all the sites along the peninsula.

- c. The other major omission in the assessment of the Hamble Airfield is the proximity to numerous 'sensitive human receptors'. Namely, it is adjacent to two schools, one proposed access point being opposite the entrance to the primary school, a Health Centre, a recreation ground, the Hamble River marinas and its moorings as well as being surrounded on three sides by residential property.

4. Plan fails to meet legal requirements in site selection

- a. The requirements of the Habitats Regulations are not optional. They are legal requirements.
- b. The screening exercise clearly identified mineral extraction from the Hamble Airfield as having the potential for impacts upon the Natura 2000 site and therefore an Appropriate Assessment must be carried out that identifies firstly alternative sites and in their absence mitigation measures. If effects remain then the test of overriding public interest must be undertaken.
- c. The County is unable to recommend the Airfield site until it has passed the Appropriate Assessment test which has not yet been completed.

5. Seeking alternatives:

- a. Where uncertainties exist or proposed sites are clearly beset by problems it is the responsibility of the plan makers to look for alternatives,
- b. The identification of alternatives is also a requirement under the Appropriate Assessment process which is currently incomplete
- c. 'The best of what is left' is not a satisfactory reason to allocate a site clearly beset with issues such as the Airfield. If further site search with the South Hampshire area reveals there are no alternatives available then site selection should be carried out outside this area, even outside the County or even offshore.
- d. It is hard to believe County or Government policy states that mineral extraction should be undertaken regardless of the social, economic or environmental cost to a community.

6. Recommendation 2-c 'illegal'

- a. A planning authority cannot adopt a plan without it going through the process as outlined in Recommendation B and set out in statute.
- b. There are 'saved' policies which are applicable in the interim until the proposed plan has been through Examination in Public.

In summary:

- a. Come to Hamble and fully understand what is at stake. Misapplication and inconsistent approach has led to an unsustainable solution being proposed. The Airfield Site should be removed on traffic and access issues alone. Professional environmental planning consultants agree, they also believe the current process makes the plan flawed and unsound
- b. The legal requirements state that the inclusion of the Airfield cannot be undertaken until the Appropriate Assessment is completed and its requirements fulfilled. Take this time to make a good decision for the County. Hamble is a village and amenity that is not only important locally, but to the County, Nationally and Internationally.