

DJP/ES

18 October 2012

Christine Symes  
Planning Casework Department  
Communities and Local Government  
1-H1 Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

Dear Ms Symes

**Re: Land in and around former Aerodrome  
North Orbital Road, Upper Colne Valley, Hertfordshire (Radlett)  
Application Ref: 5/09/07/08**

Thank you for sending us copies of the responses to your letter of 19 September 2012 inviting views on the reopening of the above Inquiry and conjoining the Inquiry with that into a Railroad Freight Interchange at Colnbrook.

We would wish to comment particularly on the response from CgMs acting on behalf of Helioslough. In our view their submission is an attempt to exert undue legal pressure on DCLG to act in a manner that is completely contrary to the fundamental planning principles which you are trying to address. Whilst we are not enthusiastic about the further delay that will be caused by the reopening of the Inquiry, we continue to support the Secretary of State's contention that it is a necessary requirement to properly deal with the strategic planning issues that are being touched on.

In their submission, Helioslough appear to have conveniently forgotten that the initial Inspector only dismissed many of the planning objections on the grounds that they were outweighed by the requirement for a Strategic Rail Freight Terminal. The Inspector was required to implement the judgement of Solomon in determining between a site which had specific proposals before him and other options which were not properly quantified. The Inspector, in his decision, specifically referred to various elements clearly having a demonstrable harm in planning terms, but that such harm was outweighed by the strategic regional benefit of a Rail Freight Terminal. Whatever your view is of that initial judgement, it certainly does not amount to the contention in the statement from CgMs, (para 9), that "following a very substantial Inquiry in

2007, all of the very wide range in sites, specific reasons for refusal were rejected by the Inspector and Secretary of State in his Decision Letter in 2008”.

It is worth going back to the planning principles in this matter in looking at the best way forward. The Government has made the decision that the provision of a Rail Freight Terminal in the “north-west sector” to serve London is of strategic regional benefit. Whether you agree with this or not, this is stated in settled Government Policy and therefore not a matter for consideration by any Inquiry.

Having determined this, the issue then comes as to what is the most suitable site. Whilst many would consider that, given the strategic regional nature of the development, this would also properly be a decision made by Government, in a similar way to the current debate in relation to Airport capacity within London and the south-east, it is clear that, in this particular instance, reliance is being put on sites being promoted by potential developers.

Of sites that have been looked at, there is an argument that can be legitimately made by the Department of Communities and Local Government that only two sites have been put forward as realistic proposals. We would argue that the strong support for Sundon, near Luton from the host Local Authorities suggest that this should also be included in a conjoined Inquiry, however, we do accept that proposals for this site are a lot less developed than the Helioslough and Colnbrook proposals and therefore could not be considered in the same detail.

In order to make a proper comparison, the data and methodology used to analyse the benefits and disbenefits of both sites need to be the same. Indeed, unlike Helioslough, we are strongly of the view that this should be looked at by a “fresh pair of eyes” and indeed much of the data and analysis done in respect of the Helioslough site is now significantly out of date and would need to be re-examined in light of changes to traffic movements, other developments and changes since the original 2007 Inquiry.

In view of the above, we feel that a conjoined Inquiry should consider the issues as follows:

1. Are the sites before it are the only realistic alternatives that meet the Government’s objectives in relation to a strategic Railfreight Terminal?

*- If this is the case*

2. Is only one strategic Rail Freight Terminal required and would providing two cause unacceptable damage to the environment on one or other of the sites?
3. If one site is appropriate, what are the relative merits in terms of the criteria below of the two sites.

- a) Accessibility to the rail network and rail capacity.
- b) Accessibility to the road and redistribution network and the relative effects that the additional traffic would have on the road network.
- c) The effect of additional congestion on the local environment, both in terms of noise and pollution.
- d) The quality of the Green Belt in the alternative locations and the implications of the effective loss of the Green Belt on the primary objectives of the Green Belt.
- e) The relative sustainability of the sites and in particular access to suitable workforce.
- f) Any other environmental and local factors.

A full Inquiry is the only way that a proper planning decision can be made. Therefore the attempts by both Helioslough and the developers at Colnbrook to prevent such a conjoined Inquiry should be strongly resisted.

Yours sincerely

Signed

David Parry

Sandy Walkington