

Polesworth, with Warton and Birchmoor, Parish Council

Objection to the proposed Hodgetts development application on land North East of junction 10 of the M42 and adjacent to the A5.6

The Parish Council is submitting a number of points of objection to the planning application for this development many of which were raised at a public meeting hosted by the Parish Council in Birchmoor.

The Local Plan

- Under the recently adopted Local Plan the “Strategic Gap,” giving separation between the Communities of Tamworth and Polesworth, Birchmoor and Dordon was seen as being of significant and, indeed, “strategic” importance. This development breeches that gap and would be a significant factor in breaking down the distinctive nature of these communities. In approving the Local Plan the Inspector gave special emphasis in stating the need for this.

To abandon this principle would be seen to significantly undermine the integrity of the local plan as well as being to the significant detriment to the communities of Polesworth, Birchmoor and Dordon.

Noise Pollution

- The impact of this proposed development would be particularly acute to the village of Birchmoor. A lorry park is going to operate 24hours a day with persistent noise from refrigerated trailers as well as the significant noise associated with vehicle movements and, although the proposed lorry park is positioned on the A5 side of the warehouse, the noise is still going to carry into Birchmoor. There would also be additional noise generated by the warehouse operations themselves with the projected buffer landscaping and tree planting zones being too close to the settlement to avoid significant intrusion.

A5 Highway

- The projected additional access to the A5 is seen as being problematic. This is a stretch of road which is inundated with traffic lights serving the numerous industrial estates. Air pollution on this stretch is already being recorded at levels above European permitted standards and additional logistics premises, together with the proposed lorry park will only exacerbate this problem.
- We note the proposals with regard to electrical charging points but see this as essentially tokenism. Recent research into battery powered heavy and medium haulage transport indicates that the current capability is nowhere near the standard required.
Research in Germany indicates that battery powered, fully laden, heavy haulage vehicles are reduced to speeds of around 5miles per hour on hills and often require recharging at the top. This is not a viable option in the present or the foreseeable future and should not be portrayed as a viable prospect.
- A further problem with loading additional HGV traffic on to the A5 is that when the A5 becomes congested, traffic, including HGV’s, seeks to find a way around the congestion via the B5000, this then routes this traffic through the centre of Polesworth. This frequently happens as a result of road works or accidents on the A5 but if congestion were to substantially increase on the A5 the pressure on the B5000, and the community of Polesworth, will simply become gridlocked and intolerable and the flow of traffic north to south through the village would become impossible.

Employment

- The proposed development is heralded as a provider of employment opportunities. This is an area of high employment with the vast majority of opportunities being in low skilled and relatively low wage opportunities, which are characteristic of the logistics sector.
- This proposed development will do little if anything to promote diversity in an area already inundated with logistic provision. We would also point out that employment in the logistics sector is increasingly becoming vulnerable to automation which does not seem to “future proof” employment prospects from this proposed development. It has also been pointed out that 7 existing warehouse / units are currently empty on the A5 on this stretch of industrial provision.

Other concerns

- Concern has been expressed about the two footpaths which run through the proposed site which if diverted will effectively mean the loss of this facility to this area and its community.
- Deep concern has been expressed by residents of Birchmoor at a recent public meeting with regard to the impact of this proposed development on the distinctive nature of their community; the possibility of an increase in criminal activity in the area as lorry parks do have a tendency to result in an increase in criminality associated with the location of lorry parks. Statistics show that there are between 10 and 20 break-ins per month for 40 lorries.
- The lorries often contain valuable loads which attract criminal activity which can spill over into the surrounding area. Additional light pollution in addition to increased noise pollution is also seen as a problem.
- The Council deplores the loss of more agricultural land and questions whether the use of brownfield sites adjacent to the recent industrial developments on the south side of the A5 have been fully explored.
- In conclusion we would state that this proposed development represents a significant threat to the communities which come under the auspices of Polesworth Parish Council. It is in breach of the “strategic gap” which is given prominence in our recently adopted local plan and as such undermines the integrity of the local plan were permission to be granted. The proposed development will have a significant impact on the distinctive nature of the communities of Birchmoor and Polesworth while in return offering employment opportunities which are currently available in abundance and which may well not be sustainable in the event of perceived future developments. The additional loading on the local road network does not appear to be sustainable or in the interests of the local community in terms of making transport links more difficult. Individual rights are likely to be curtailed in terms of the degradation of rights of way, increased noise, air and light pollution and the possibility of increased criminal activity in the locality. As such we feel that we have no alternative but
- to register a very strong objection to this proposed development.