

A large, abstract graphic consisting of two overlapping, thick, curved bands. The inner band is light grey and forms a large, open circle. The outer band is a light orange color and follows a similar path, slightly offset from the grey one. The bands are positioned such that they appear to be part of a larger, continuous loop.

KENT SCIENCE PARK,
SITTINGBOURNE

Transport Appraisal Summary and Critique
Executive Summary

Project No. 09-023
March 2009

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INTRODUCTION

1 This executive summary refers to a report prepared by Odyssey Consulting Engineers (OCE) on behalf of The Five Parishes Opposition Group (5 POG), entitled “Transport Appraisal Summary and Critique”. This report critically reviews the Transport Assessment and draft Travel Plan accompanying two planning applications to expand facilities at the Kent Science Park (KSP). This report is to form the basis of representations by 5 POG on these planning applications.

2 The Transport Assessment and draft Travel Plan were produced by JMP Consulting on behalf of KSP. Initial scoping discussions with Kent County Council concentrated primarily on traffic and highway issues arising from the proposed expansion of KSP. Relatively little consideration was given to the transport sustainability of the site. However, at these discussions KCC stated that achieving a modal shift away from the private car would be challenging given the Science Park’s location.

3 The derivation of trip rates and forecast traffic generation arising from the proposed development, as set out in the Transport Assessment, was based on an estimated 1200 employees at the existing site. Additional sources suggest that the actual number of employees on site at the time of the preparation of the report may have been considerably lower. The use of a higher employee figure would result in a lower trip rate per employee and therefore a lower predicted traffic generation arising from the proposed development. If the number of employees on site was lower than the 1200 figure used then the resultant trip rate per employee would be higher and the forecast additional traffic resulting from the proposed development would be correspondingly greater. This would lead to the impact of additional traffic on the surrounding streets being more significant than that reported in the TA.

4 The Transport Assessment produced by JMP acknowledges that pedestrian and cycle facilities are “limited” and that pedestrian accessibility to the site “is not considered a viable means of accessing the site”. It is considered therefore, that this proposal fails to comply with a fundamental

requirement of national transport policy; an issue which the measures contained within the transport assessment and the draft travel plan do not overcome.

5 No meaningful measures are contained within either the Transport Assessment or the draft Travel Plan which would significantly improve the accessibility of KSP by bus. This, combined with the above limitations in respect of pedestrian and cycle accessibility, would render the proposals in their current form to be non-compliant with national sustainable transport policy.

6 Guidance set out in policy at both the national and regional levels also makes it clear that poorly located development should not be permitted because of the existence of a travel plan.

7 Consideration of the site in the adopted Swale Borough Local Plan identifies the need for a detailed masterplan. This would assist in placing the proposed development in the context of potential future expansion at KSP either within the existing perimeter fence or outside it. It is evident from the submitted documentation that a master plan has not been undertaken. It is considered that the lack of a masterplan is a weakness of the proposals in that it does not enable a true baseline position at KSP to be fully verified upon which the full implications of traffic generated by this site can be understood.

8 The Transport Assessment suggests that the “additional development traffic to the local highway network does not materially change the situation relative to the do minimum scenario”. It also states that, “even if an assumption is made that all additional trips arising as a result of the development were made by car, this would not materially impact on the operation of the local highway network”. Contrary to the views expressed in the TA set out above, there would appear from the results of capacity testing at the existing junction of Ruins Barn Road with Broadoak Road, that the level of queuing traffic on Broadoak Road on its approach to Ruins Barn Road during the PM peak period would increase from the equivalent of 33 vehicles to 126 vehicles at year 2013 with the proposed development in place. The

delay arising from this increase in queuing would encourage drivers to turn right out of the site, thereby exacerbating the use of the existing network of rat runs to the south of the site, via narrow country lanes which are considered to be unsuitable for this purpose, not least on road safety and environmental grounds. Comments made in the Transport Assessment regarding the immateriality of impact on the operation of the local highway network are therefore misleading.

9 The claims made in the draft Travel Plan to increase the proportion of staff and visitors to and from KSP by modes of transport other than the private car are not proven and are considered to be unrealistic. No science-based assessment has been undertaken to consider, for example, how many staff at KSP travel from the local area and how many travel from further afield where public transport options particularly by bus would be unrealistic.

10 Overall it is considered that there are a number of significant issues and impacts arising from the proposed development which have not been properly addressed and successfully mitigated. Indeed given the location of the proposed development it is questionable as to whether these issues are capable of mitigation.