

STRiFE 9/06

Public Inquiry into Appeal by Helioslough Ltd into a proposed  
Strategic Rail Freight Interchange on land in and around Former  
Aerodrome, North Orbital Road, Upper Colne Valley,  
Hertfordshire

Proof of Evidence by Patricia Pryce on behalf of Park Street and  
District Residents Association

A LOCAL PERSPECTIVE



# **Park Street and District Residents Association**

## **1.0 Introduction**

My name is Patricia Pryce and I am authorised to speak on behalf of Park Street and District Residents Association (PSRA).

Earlier this year Park Street won the CPRE Hertfordshire village of the year for environment category and we all very proud of that success. The judges looked for new ideas and for villagers who take an active interest and a pride in their surroundings. We were able to show that we are a well-kept village populated by residents who care for our surroundings. We have a wide expanse of extensively used green areas with lakes and rivers, school gardens cared for by enthusiastic children, an active litter-picking group, annual bulb planting 'parties' and allotments that are well tended and more popular every year.

Our fear is that this development will destroy the 'heart' of our village and the motivation we have for the time and energy we devote to activities such as these. It will become ever more difficult to summon up the energy when our village and surrounding areas will no longer belong to us. Our immediate surroundings will become alien to us and we will become alienated from them. We consider that if this development goes ahead on our doorstep and our environment is changed that we would have very little chance of ever winning this accolade again.

We believe that this development will have a devastating effect on our environment and, therefore, on the lives of residents within the Park Street and Frogmore areas for the following reasons:

## **2.0 Roads**

2.1 The roads are already extremely overcrowded in this area. Getting into and out of Park Street and Frogmore is already a struggle and is particularly traumatic between 6:30 and 09:30 am or 3:30 to 7:30pm. Access to the Park Street/M10 roundabout is compromised from all directions at these times. Leaving Park Street via the A405 and the A5183 is particularly challenging. Many residents already time their exit from the village to avoid the rush hour traffic, although this is not possible for those with work and schoolchildren.

2.2 The A414 is already the heaviest used dual carriageway in the whole of Hertfordshire. The current usage is already increasing with the continuing development of the Hatfield Business Park and the London Colney Retail Park and we are fearful of just how much our lives will be blighted and constrained by the proposed extra traffic.

2.3 This issue is exacerbated every time there is a problem on the local sections of the M25 and the M1. This happens with some regularity and is not confined to rush hour or during the week. Satellite navigation systems will increase the amount of traffic



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using our roads to avoid congestion on the motorways; this will also increase through the road works for the M25 widening in our area.

2.4 The extra lorry and car movements expected from this development will bring our roads to a standstill with much greater frequency than at present, imprisoning us in our village. Bearing in mind the 24 hour operation of this site, this also means that there will be no quieter times on our roads. And standing traffic will add to the noise and air pollution problems.

2.5 Many of the villagers in Park Street work in Central London and currently a 4 mile trip to or from the mainline service at St Albans can take more than 40 minutes at certain times of the day. This means that the current levels of traffic using the local roads move slower than that in Central London

### **3.0 Rail**

3.1 As previously mentioned many of the residents in Park Street and Frogmore are regular rail users. We travel on an already congested line into London.

3.2 We have suffered on numerous occasions when engineering works overrun, but engineering work will always need to take place. Already trains are delayed, trains are cancelled and passengers are piled into trains in conditions that cattle would not be allowed to travel in. It is a certainty that the freight trains will further compromise the reliability of our commuter trains. We know they will breakdown, we know that damage will be caused to the line, and we know this because it happens already without them. It is no surprise to us that First Capital Connect is also against the proposal, when taking into account the current issues that we face.

3.3 All St Albans commuters, not just those in our area, will face a constant battle getting into and out of St Albans on time – and those people with young families face all the stress and pressure this involves with childcare etc.

### **4.0 Employment**

4.1 We are in an area of high employment – PSRA consider that even with the current economic climate, an SRFI should be sited in a more appropriate place where it would also be readily accessible to a local workforce. Workers will need to be sourced from elsewhere, being bussed in or driving in, adding to some of the issues we already experience – so we will gain less, much less because of all the additional problems this will create.

### **5.0 General Quality of Life**

5.1 We live in this area because we have chosen to live in semi rural Hertfordshire and enjoy the life it provides us. As a village we have a community and an identity. We create this through activities such as our residents association, having an active



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neighbourhood watch, producing a village fete, having strong links with our schools etc - 'we know who our neighbours are'.

5.2 Park Street and Frogmore are not without their problems in terms of quality of life but we know that this rail freight interchange will diminish our experience of life in this area as a result of increased air, noise and light pollution and as a threat to our open spaces.

## 6.0 Air Pollution

6.1 Air quality is already very poor in some parts of our area, and currently under a monitoring scheme. This is largely as a result of the enormous increases in traffic going through and around our villages as a result of major road developments over the years such as the M25 and the M1. We know that the development of this terminal is going to make it much worse. This will be further impacted by the length of time traffic is left standing on the roads and stopping and starting and all the emissions this produces. This will lead to greater risks of asthma and other related diseases for our children and future generations

## 7.0 Noise

7.1 Other than the almost constant rumble of traffic noise levels are relatively low in this area, at the moment. This is one of the things that adds to the attraction of the area to those who want to live here. Are we to be penalised for having low noise levels? This noise will be relentless – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Despite the dampers, our present quiet times will be overrun by a 24hr operation from both traffic and trains. For some of our residents this is going to be extreme change to the noise levels they currently experience, considering the proximity of the development is within only a few metres of their gardens.

## 8.0 Light

8.1 Many of the residents experience proper darkness at night; they look out into open spaces with no street lights or other industrial light pollution. The nightscape will be changed forever with this development. No architectural or technical enclosure will counteract the misery of looking out onto an industrial glow.

8.2 Air pollution, noise and light have all been used as talking points in the past. We believe that if this development goes ahead we will live with the torture of increased noise, air and traffic pollution for generations, potentially forever – because once this thing is here it won't go away. In fact chances are it will get bigger, which bring me onto my final main area – that of open spaces and greenbelt.



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## **9.0 Open Spaces & Greenbelt**

9.1 We currently enjoy open spaces around our community. Our green belt protects us from merging into one large urban mass. Our belief is that green belt should not be built on; it is there for a purpose.

9.2 We are proud of our open natural spaces and the wildlife that inhabit them. We want this to continue in its natural format without it being beautified or sanitised. The promise of a community forest and park does not excite us. We do not need it, nor do we want it. We have our green spaces. A community park will attract visitors other than our community but we know that because there are pitiful public transport links other users of the community park will be road users further exacerbating the problem on our roads.

9.3 At the moment our children can enjoy the outdoors, we can walk our dogs, go horse riding or cycling – we have that to enjoy and we do, without it being created for us.

9.4 Because we are a small community we are relatively 'safe' – we know each other and we have an element of shared trust. For example our crime rate is relatively low. This development will destroy our community and create further hazards; - we, our children and future generations will no longer be able to enjoy the freedom we currently have.

9.5 Helioslough boast that only 20% of the 419 hectares will be built on. We know that what that really means is 'for now'. We know that once these spaces start to be eroded, once they start to be built on, it will be the thin end of the wedge. It will be a catastrophe for us. We have chosen to live here. Park Street and Frogmore are currently classed as villages surrounded by Green Belt. If this development goes ahead they will be small isolated communities surrounded by an industrial park.

## **10.0 Conclusion**

10.1 In conclusion, we fear that this area will no longer be an attractive area of choice for people to live. For those of us already living here, the impact on our lives in respect of the quality of our day-to-day life together will be decimated. Few people will want to move here and existing residents may well find it incredibly difficult to leave the area because of the knock-on effect on our house prices. If Helioslough are allowed to go ahead with this, our lives will change forever. Please do not let this happen.