



**CPRE/3**

**Town and Country Planning Act 1990**

**Appeal by Kent International Gateway Limited  
APPU2235/A/09/2006565/NWF**

**Kent International Gateway, Land West of Junction 8, M20, Maidstone, Kent**

**Statement on behalf of Protect Kent (the Kent Branch of CPRE)**

**LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT**



The Kent Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

Registered office: Kent branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England, 3 Evegat Park Barn, Station Road, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6SX Fax: 01303 815189 Email: [info@cprekent.org.uk](mailto:info@cprekent.org.uk)

**Phone: 01303 815180 [www.cprekent.org.uk](http://www.cprekent.org.uk)**

A company limited by guarantee, registered in England number 4335730, registered charity number 1092012

1. Protect Kent is the Kent Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). CPRE is a national charity which promotes the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England. We advocate positive solutions for the long-term future of the countryside. Founded in 1926, we have 60,000 supporters and a branch in every county. The Kent Branch was established in 1929.
2. The proposed development would be highly intrusive from a great many of vantage points around the site. The most devastating would be from the elevated land within the AONB to the north and east and particularly from the North Downs Way and parts of the lower Pilgrim's Way. The sweep of Kent countryside, and its historic character made famous by a thousand years of pilgrimage would be seriously challenged by such inappropriate development. The Views from individual sites of particular visitor interest and historical significance such as Thurnam Castle (the remains of a C12 motte and bailey castle) to the north, which offer spectacular views across the weald of Kent, would also be adversely affected.
3. While it may be the case that, as the applicant claims, much of the site would be screened from view of walkers using the North Downs Way and Pilgrim's Way, much of this screening is by vegetation which is visually permeable for much of the year except in high summer. Also, the nature of these trails is such that, when views are largely screened by vegetation, the occasional views which open out to the south are made all the more impactful and therefore valuable to users of this amenity. The road and rail routes which have evolved over many years through what is known as the Channel Corridor involve no such massing and are particularly unobtrusive from these vantage points. This contrast of form and function would make the appearance of built warehousing all the more intrusive.
4. For the foregoing reasons, the proximity of the motorway and railways does not detract from the perception of travellers to and through this landscape that it is currently of a predominantly rural and agricultural landscape. Those perceptions would be totally changed if this were to go ahead. Instead, the perception would be of an urbanised, unappreciated landscape. This would be wholly at odds with the emerging plans for Maidstone town as a growth area surrounded by a high quality environment.
5. The topography of the area would be utterly changed; what is now undulating countryside that is part of the foreground of the North Downs Escarpment in the AONB and provides the gently sloping lead up to the steep scarp slope that rises dramatically north of the Pilgrim's Way, would become flat land covered in buildings the ugliness of which could not be disguised by colour. This is an historic farming landscape, evolving over several millennia, forming a significant part of the heritage of the area and giving a sense of place and identity that contributes to the quality of life of local residents.
6. The more recent submissions from the applicant offer some mitigation of the intrusion of the proposed development, through acoustic shielding and a green roof. However, even green roofs cannot offset the visual impact of the massive scale of these alien elements of disproportionate scale in this

landscape. In addition to the intrusion of the buildings, there will also be the overhead cranes which would be a necessary permanent feature to transfer containers on to and off the railway sidings. These are even more visually intrusive elements which cannot be adequately shielded and would give the impression of a permanent building site.

7. The Pilgrim's Way, the North Downs Way and Leeds castle are vital elements of Kent's tourism portfolio. It is our contention that entirely inadequate consideration has been given to the adverse impact on Kent's economy of loss of income as a result of the degradation and industrialisation of this area (our submitted proof CPRE/2 expands on these arguments).
8. The whole context involves a combination of AONB and its setting, within the relevant planning context as explained in our evidence on planning set out in CPRE/1. In this context the adverse impact of views of the site from other locations – particularly from the village of Leeds – have been entirely underestimated.
9. This is an area of many listed buildings, whose existence and context is a very important part of the landscape and visual character of the area, as a place to live, and as a highly accessible tourist destination. There is a real risk of structural damage to historic buildings as a result of additional traffic movements. All would be diminished and devalued by the intrusive effects of such an inappropriate development.