



CPRE/6

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 by Graham Warren on behalf of Protect Kent
(the Kent Branch of CPRE)**

CULVERTING, SURFACE WATER DRAINAGE AND WATER RESOURCES



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

Phone: 01303 815180 www.cprekent.org.uk

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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. Protect Kent has special concerns with respect to the impact on the integrity and quality of the Folkestone Beds aquifer; a major groundwater unit supporting abstraction by South East Water from public supply boreholes at Thurnham and Hockers Lane, both locations falling within or close to an Environment Agency source protection zone. The borehole group has a combined rated deployable drought output of approximately 10 Ml/d. This represents a significant component of the Company's resources serving their Eastern Supply Area (formerly served by Mid Kent Water). The Folkestone Beds have a relatively high permeability and are therefore vulnerable to pollution by the ingress of any contaminants arising from surface spillages.
3. The Company's recently completed Water Resource Management Plan has highlighted the delicate supply/demand balance, as evidenced by difficulties experienced in maintaining minimum levels of service under relatively moderate drought conditions. Records show that Mid Kent were obliged to impose hose pipe bans for 9 out of the last 20 years of their ownership; and in 4 of these it also proved necessary to apply for drought orders or seek restrictions on "non-essential" uses of water. In taking such action the Company fell short of their undertaking to meet their declared levels of service with respect to security of supply. In recognition of this, the supply area has been designated as "water-scarce": a precondition for the adoption of compulsory metering. Southern Water's their business plan for 2010-15 makes provision for a comprehensive water efficiency programme.
4. The Company's situation is made more vulnerable by the paucity of alternative sources of supply that could be deployed at times of severe drought or failure in the operation of any of the boreholes. Any development likely to materially reduce the natural rate of replenishment of the aquifer or lead to any deterioration in groundwater quality must be taken as a threat to the environmental and economic sustainability of the dependant rural and urban communities; a risk which can only increase with the intensification of climate change and housing development. In this respect the proposal presents an unusually severe hazard and, given the nature and scale of the routine operations on this site, it is difficult to see how sufficient safeguards can be put in place to protect the integrity of the resource and ensure continuity of yield and quality of supplies from the borehole sources.
5. It would also seem to follow that the need to accommodate aquifer vulnerability must to a degree restrict the scope of SUDs and in consequence reduce the annual rate of natural replenishment of the aquifer by rainfall. To do otherwise would be to risk substantial and, for all practical purposes, irreversible pollution from any or all of the hazards likely to be encountered in the management of facilities of this type; not least the handling and storage of

fuels and chemicals, the collection and containment of leakages, and the safe disposal of any discharges associated with fire-fighting operations. In such instances, the primary objectives of SUDs and aquifer protection measures are not easily reconciled.

6. So far the Applicants have failed to show that they have recognised the special circumstances of the KIG development and the far reaching consequences of any failure in the management of on-site protective measures. The outcome, in extreme cases, could involve abandonment of the affected boreholes, and this, in an area where the existing balance of supply and demand is already in deficit under design drought conditions, with little if any scope for further development of indigenous resources. The EA in their statement of the grounds for objection make clear their requirement that there should be no material change in the flow duration characteristics of the 3 watercourses crossing the site, i.e. that there should be no difference between the pre and post development regimes; certainly that there should be no increase in the intensity and frequency of flooding. They support the use of SUDs to this end but specify that only clean uncontaminated surface water should be discharged to soakaways; hence their requirement (set out in 5.36.15) that the risk assessment and remediation strategy should make provision for the total containment of any leakage of fuels or other hazardous chemicals stored on site at any time. (It would seem to follow from this that the available containment capacity should also extend to any potentially hazardous materials discharged as a result of vehicle accidents or fire-fighting operations). To be completely secure in all such respects could require the impermeable surfacing of the greater part of the site, with drainage to sealed interceptors and provision for the separation of clean and contaminated water. Such a regime would by definition preclude any effective SUDs element and the need to preserve or replicate the pre-development flood characteristics would call for substantial contingency storage incorporating fairly sophisticated controlled release systems. Also, as approximately half of the site is underlain by Folkestone Beds, there would also be a substantial reduction in the natural replenishment by rainfall of the aquifer; with consequent loss of deployable drought output from the boreholes
7. Conversely, any relaxation of the protective measures would inevitably produce a more natural discharge profile for the surface water courses and a corresponding increase in the annual replenishment (recharge) of the aquifer; but the price for this would be an increased risk of groundwater pollution. We would therefore endorse the EA requirements relating to pollution prevention, and further recommend that the site investigation incorporates a comprehensive assessment of the implications of the final proposed system for drainage and containment and that this should reflect the importance of the water supply aspects. Failing this we would be obliged to oppose the development on the grounds that it represents a material threat to the security and continuity of potable supplies to the rural and urban communities in this part of the Company's supply area.