



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT FOCUS GROUP

THAMES GATEWAY BRIDGE PUBLIC INQUIRY

BEXLEY LA21 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT FOCUS GROUP

SUMMARY OF CASE

1.0. Introduction.

My name is Jeremy Cotton of 43, Whernside Close, Thamesmead, London, SE28 8HB. I am a Chartered Biologist and a professional ecologist, now retired. I have been a member of the Bexley LA21 Natural Environment Focus Group (hereinafter NEFG) since at least January 2000. At the AGM on 25th May 2005 I was elected chairman.

1.1. NEFG has been opposed to the Thames Gateway Bridge for several years. It was among our objections, presented by our then chairman, Michael Winship, to at the Bexley Unitary Development Plan Public Inquiry of 2002. His successor, Jean Fraser, spoke in the same sense at the Bexley Planning Committee meeting on 11th November 2004, and at the Greenwich Planning Board meeting in December 2004.

1.2. Other Bexley LA21 Focus Groups have adopted similar positions. Since the pre-inquiry meetings we have attended meetings with officers of Bexley Council in an attempt to find common ground, but without success.

1.3. NEFG objected to the proposed RRRL Incinerator at Belvedere during the 2003 Public Inquiry, on the grounds, inter alia, of the increased number of lorry movements generated on local and main roads, the increase in air pollution, and the impact on areas of open space and of wildlife importance in the area.

1.4. NEFG is examining the environmental and traffic impacts of the Crossrail scheme, currently before Parliament, and will include evidence where relevant in our case to this Inquiry.

2.0. Access to evidence.

2.1. At the time of writing (28-30th May) I have received neither the rule 6 statement nor the proofs of evidence of Transport for London, and only the rule 6 statements from the other parties. It is therefore impossible to specify any questions of clarification - I shall have to include any that arise in my cross-examinations - or to be precise as to which witnesses, either for TfL or the supporters, I shall need to cross-examine. I therefore have to give provisional notice that I may wish to cross-examine all the witnesses, for both TfL and their supporters, and hope to reduce the list once I have been able to study the evidence.

2.2. I expect to adopt part or all of the proofs of other participants in the Inquiry, usually, but not exclusively other objectors. I shall also refer to other documents, and hope to supply these if they have not already been deposited in the Inquiry library or referred to by other participants.

3.0. Effect on sites of wildlife importance.

NEFG is concerned over the conservation, preservation and, where possible, improvement of wildlife and wildlife habitat within the London Borough of Bexley. A number of AMINCs exist in the area affected by the proposals, as well as other sites given a lower rating.

3.1. Lesnes Abbey and Lesnes Abbey Woods. With Bostall Heath and Woods, these formed part of a single public open space, and single area of habitat now graded AMINC by the Mayor of London, until the abolition of the GLC in 1986. Any increase in traffic on Knee Hill or New Road will increase the severance and have an adverse effect on the wildlife in the two areas.

3.2. Erith Marshes, in the broadest sense. This area includes a large area of AMINC, an LNR designated under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, an area of AMINC quality (Southmere Green) whose precise status is the subject of ongoing dispute, and other areas of lower quality. These form an important area of public amenity valued by the local community. Parts are currently being managed to increase access by and the value of the area to, the public. This value will be reduced by the increased levels of noise resulting from increased levels of traffic on the A2016 Thamesmead Spine Road. The severance created by the existing road network will be increased by the increased traffic levels, and will affect both wildlife and the use of the area by the public.

3.3. Southmere Park and adjacent areas. This is of lower wildlife value, but the effect on the public will be similar to, although probably less than, that set out in 3.2. above.

3.4. Crossways Park and adjacent areas. As 3.3. above, but both noise and severance effects will be much greater than for Southmere Park.

3.5. Franks Park. This is set back from the main road, but there still be some effect.

3.6. Other sites. The effects of noise and severance can be expected, on TfL's own figures, to continue east to the Borough boundary at Crayford Marshes.

4.0. Other Environmental impacts.

NEFG expects to raise other concerns with regard to the increased noise, traffic, air pollution and other adverse effects of the proposals once we have access to the full proofs of evidence.

5.0. Errors and Omissions Excepted.

NEFG may also raise other issues after consultation with local member groups and other Focus groups within the Bexley LA21 Network. We will probably wish to adopt evidence submitted by other parties to the Inquiry, both for and against.

6.0. Conclusions.

NEFG objects to the proposed scheme on the grounds that it is inadequately thought through and designed, creates levels of traffic for which the road network is not designed, and which cannot cope, and will have a deleterious effect on the Natural Environment, wildlife, wildlife habitat, and the people of Bexley as they go about their daily lives, including access to public open space, wildlife and wildlife habitat.