

The proposed Radlett Strategic Rail Freight Interchange – An Update

Phil Escritt

In 2014 after 5 years and two public inquiries a development company, Helioslough, received outline planning permission from the government for a massive new Strategic Rail Freight Interchange on the former Radlett Aerodrome in the Green Belt south of St Albans. They cannot proceed with its construction until they either buy or lease the necessary land from Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) who are the landowners. As far as we are aware HCC have not yet made a decision to either sell or lease this land and we continue to hope that they will not do either.

However Helioslough would also need detailed planning permission for many outstanding aspects and in the last year they have submitted multiple planning applications to St Albans District Council (SADC) covering the issues which were not included in the original permission. The overall amount of detail is such that SADC have had to take on additional staff to cope with the workload.

Several of these planning applications provide details on access to the proposed Country Park which was offered as partial mitigation for the adverse effects on the Green Belt. In conjunction with our cycling and horse riding colleagues in the St Albans Access Forum we have examined these proposals in detail and compared them with the proposals in HCC's Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Our aim has been to ensure that, if the worst happens and the development does take place, the Country Park will be as good as possible and certainly no worse than Helioslough's original proposals.

In some cases the developer has submitted repeated planning application on the same issues taking into account the responses to previous applications. The latest proposals are better than the earlier ones but we are still not satisfied and will continue to press for further improvements.

A major deficiency in the proposed Country Park is the geographical separation between its individual parts and the lack of any easy access between them. Fortunately most of the land between these parts is already in the public ownership of either SADC or HCC and these councils have the power to provide the connecting paths which would be necessary to give the park some coherence. If HCC does sell or lease the land to Helioslough it will receive an enormous amount of money. Some of this money should be spent on improving facilities in the neighbourhood of this terminal and we shall be pressing it to spend some of it on providing the necessary links across its land.

Radlett Strategic Rail Freight Interchange – December 2018

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Will the saga of the proposed Radlett Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) never end? I first reported the planning application for a massive SRFI on the former Radlett Aerodrome in 2006. Eight years later, after two planning inquiries and in spite of petitions with more than 10,000 signatures, the government eventually granted outline planning permission.

Since then the developer has submitted a mass of highly detailed proposals. This summer, after long consideration, the St Albans District Council gave its detailed planning permission. But the development would require the landowners, Herts County Council (HCC), to either sell or lease the land on which the SRFI is to be built. So far they have not agreed to do either.

Meanwhile the St Albans District Council has been struggling to create a new Local Plan which will accommodate the more than 10,000 houses that are required to meet the government's latest policies. It issued a call for sites and HCC offered almost all the land it owns in the district including the site for the SRFI.

The St Albans District Council has accepted this part of the offer. Its latest plans, which have just been the subject of a full public consultation, propose a new 'Park Street Garden Village' on the site of the proposed SRFI. It would have more than 2,000 houses, two new primary schools and a new secondary school. The SRFI developer has threatened legal action.

Where will this all go? Watch this space.