

Mrs Anne Main M.P.
St Albans



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
Department for Communities and Local Government
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Our ref: SA24902/CM

15 July 2016

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing following your predecessor's decision not to grant the proposed Slough International Freight Exchange (SIFE) at Colnbrook, and the inconsistency in the decision-making process which led to the strategic rail freight interchange (SRFI) being granted permission in Park Street, St Albans.

As you will be aware, the former communities secretary, Greg Clarke, dismissed the appeal to develop SIFE on 12th July 2016. Mr Clarke stated in his decision letter that he,

'agrees with the Inspector's comments... and like the Inspector, concludes that the appeal proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and that it is harmful as such. As the proposal amounts to inappropriate development he considers that, in the absence of very special circumstances, it would conflict with national policies and the CR [Slough Core Strategy].'

In October 2008, the former communities secretary, Hazel Blears, concluded that the benefits of the proposal would not clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and did not constitute very special circumstances. I strongly do not believe that this view has ever been overcome by any subsequent proposals from the developers.

You will note that,

'Like the Inspector, the Secretary of State considers that the NPS [National Policy Statement] does not change the policy test for SRFI applications in the Green Belt or the substantial weight to be attached to the harm to the Green Belt. For the reasons given by the Inspector... the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector's conclusion that the proposed development would result in a severe loss of openness.'

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This shows clearly that whilst railfreight interchanges may be considered within the national policy framework, the substantial weight of harm that would be inflicted in St Albans and the surrounding areas of Park Street and Radlett would have to be seriously considered. It is my strong opinion that it has never been demonstrated that the SRFI proposals in Radlett outweighs the damage that will be inflicted upon these communities by a railfreight terminal.

Crucially, Mr Clark accepts that,

'the proposed SRFI development's location in the Green Belt may well be an optimum solution in relation to existing patterns of distribution activity, but like the Inspector, the Secretary of State concludes that this does not reduce the actual harm that would occur.'

These are clear concomitant reasons and circumstances as to why the Radlett SRFI's original refusal should have been upheld and this application dismissed. I would urge that, if it is possible to correct these clear anomalies in the decision-making process, this application be reconsidered. My constituents have been resolute and steadfast for over a decade that SRFI in Radlett is completely wrongheaded and is not wanted by both local residents and the local authority.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anne Main".

Anne Main MP

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