

Inquiry Day 2

The Inspector put out a call for a list of viewpoints which people think she should see on her site visit next Tuesday. Please email details to us, preferably this evening, and we will pass them on.

Mr Howell Williams, Counsel for the Appellants, continued with his attempt to persuade Mr Goddard (MBC witness) not to accord much weight to MBC's saved policies from its earlier Local Plan, blaming MBC for taking such a long time to develop its Local Plan. Also to accept the magnitude of changes in government policy since publication of the Local Plan in 2000 and KCC's 1996 Structure Plan. Mr Goddard responded that the NPPF offers a much more flexible approach. Mr Goddard continued to put up a robust defence of the Appellant's case being weakened by ADL's withdrawal.

Then it was KCC's turn. Mr Cameron led Mr Russell Vick (specialist in landscape & environment planning) through his proof of evidence. Mr Vick explained that following receipt of earlier rebuttals of his evidence, he had carried out further fieldwork, producing photos taken from Shepherd Viewpoint just above the North Downs Way near Hollingbourne. He described the extent and degree of the impact such a development would have on the landscape character of the area and also Public Rights of Way, particularly to the south around Leeds village.

He talked about the impact of the "transport corridor" (ie. M20/CTRL/A20) and that the appellants had used a landscape assessment document produced by Babbie in 2003/4 when mitigation measures such as vegetation of the CTRL were very new and had had little chance to mature. He added that it was generally recognised in Kent that this document requires to be reviewed.

Cross examination by Mr Howell Williams included a bizarre interchange about the degree of blurring in photographs, and whether or not this truly reflected the weather conditions on the day they were taken! Mr Vick proved a strong witness and did not give in to repeated questioning.

The only bit of excitement during the day came when Mr Cameron asked Mr Vick to clarify an earlier answer given to Mr Howell Williams regarding the relevant weight given to grading and planning balance. Mr Howell Williams took issue, but was overruled by the Inspector stepping in and allowing the question.

KCC's next witness was Mr Colin Cottage, partner of Glenny LLP, a chartered surveyor specialising in compulsory purchase and relocation. He emphasised the lack of legally binding agreement between the developer and Scarab. Alternative sites were discussed and he said he was unaware of any active requirement for a building larger than 25,000 sq m at present. He knew of three requirements for buildings in excess of 9,300 sq m and it was always possible that two of these were ADL and Scarab.

Most of the day was spent in picking over fine details of evidence with little ground being given by any of the witnesses.

The Inquiry closed early today at about 3.10