

## **Ecclesfield Conservation and Local History Group: Objections to the Outline Application for a Proposed Motorway Service Area at J35 of the M1 (Ref. 14/01079/OUT)**

1. **Local greenspace and amenity:** Smithy Wood forms an important feature in the generally open and green landscape between Ecclesfield, Chapeltown and Thorpe Hesley. The protection and enhancement of the environment of the City is recognized by SCC to be a key feature of their strategy. The retention and enhancement of woodlands as an amenity resource in the city has long been a lynchpin principle and policy within Sheffield. This proposal is in direct conflict with this. Smithy Wood is an important local amenity and highly valued by the local community. The development of an MSA here would damage this amenity irreparably. That Smithy Wood is a valued local amenity resource has already been made clear by the application earlier this year to register all of the wood as a Village Green. This application for a village green is still to be determined and we believe that this should take precedence over the consideration of the later planning application.
2. **Green Belt:** the whole of the proposed site is within the Green Belt and protected from development in the Unitary Development Plan. Sheffield's policy, as well as the overarching NPPF, call for protection from development in Green Belts except in very special circumstances. No convincing argument has been made by the developer to suggest that this MSA development located here could be considered to have these special justifications. This development in the Green Belt should not be permitted.
3. **Ancient Woodland:** the whole of the development would be within ancient woodland, an irreplaceable natural resource of considerable and significant historical, archaeological, heritage, landscape and biodiversity value which would be fundamentally damaged irreparably by the proposals. It is not possible to simply and easily mitigate and/or compensate for any damage to this resource. The protection of Ancient Woodland from development is embedded in the NPPF, the UDP, the South Yorkshire Forest Plan, the Defra/Forestry Commission Statement of policy for England's Ancient Woodland and the Forestry Commission/Natural England Standing Advice for Ancient Woodland. This proposal runs counter to all of this and no development should take place here.
4. **Biodiversity:** Smithy Wood forms a significant part of the ecological network that runs along the Blackburn Valley which would be severed by this development. Ancient Woodland is acknowledged to be a very important habitat in the NPPF. The significance of the ancient woodland habitat locally is demonstrated by the whole wood being recorded by SCC as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS 190). In addition there are a number of locally and nationally important wildlife species in the wood, especially birds, wildflowers and fungi. In fact the fungal records of the Sorby Natural History Society includes one nationally very rare species at Smithy Wood, one rare species, two that are uncommon and five that are occasional. So important species would be lost or damaged as a result of this development. There is a firm planning principle in the NPPF that any and all developments should minimise any impacts on biodiversity and aim for a net biodiversity gain. However, it is not clear that this can in any way be achievable for this development at this location and the impacts on wildlife are unacceptable.
5. **Impact on Local Heritage:** the wood is an important heritage feature of particular significance locally. The historical and archaeological interests have been highlighted by Prof. Mel Jones in a recent review. These interests would be seriously and permanently damaged by this development.
6. **Traffic impacts:** there will be significant safety and visibility issues on the J35 roundabout resulting from the additional traffic flows emanating to and from an MSA here. The increase in traffic volumes and the disrupted flows as a result of the proposals will deleteriously affect the safe access across the roundabout at J35 to the MSA site and others locally. The additional impacts of locally generated use of any proposed MSA have not been realistically taken into

account. If the construction and/or operation of this site runs concurrently with the already permitted coal recovery operation on Hesley Wood Pit tip, the issues with increased traffic on the roundabout are likely to become even more critical, especially with the increase in HGV movements that will result. The impacts on traffic will be major and damaging.

7. **Water management and drainage:** run off and water management will be a requirement on site and this will necessitate the taking of further areas of woodland to develop the necessary infrastructure for storage and transfer of drainage. The downstream impact of this additional flow on Blackburn Brook will be deleterious
8. **Lack of Real Need:** the need for an MSA here has not been made convincingly and seems to rely heavily on a little used traffic route from the A1 southbound and via the M18 and then the M1 northbound. The close proximity of the proposed site to the existing M1 MSAs at Woolley Edge and Woodall Services also suggests that the need for a further MSA here is very tentative. This is brought into even sharper relief as there is already a well advanced proposal for a MSA in RMBC, at J33 of the M1. In addition there are many existing local fuelling and rest and refreshment facilities within easy reach of the M1, and at the very least between J37 and J33. The guidance on need for MSAs from the HA prioritizes the development of on-line services and mentions the complication to safe and efficient use of off line facilities from local users to the site. This has not been taken on board by the developers. Real need for a MSA has not been established clearly, so the development proposals are not justified.
9. **Alternative MSA sites:** there are likely to be other, less sensitive, sites available for an MSA (both locally and elsewhere in the vicinity of J35) but there is little mention of any alternatives having being considered
10. **Mitigation of impacts:** the mitigation hierarchy should be followed in considering any development and the rationale for any approach to mitigation should be explained fully. This does not seem to have been the case for this proposal, which is flawed as a result.
11. **Poor Compensation Being Offered for the Loss of Ancient Woodland:** there can be no realistic substitute for the loss of Ancient Woodlands. They are an irreplaceable resource. The developer has made a proposal to secure access and management to other woods locally to compensate for the loss of Smithy Wood. Many of the woods mentioned are already accessible to the public and well used, so there would be little real gain for local communities. The Scouts do not wish additional access to their wood, so it is far from clear just what real compensation or benefit would accrue from the proposed package. The basis of any offer of compensation is not made clear, nor how local communities will engage realistically with the proposed Trust. Furthermore, all the woods mentioned in the developer's proposed package will be substantially affected by the HS2 proposals in the future, so there is no guarantee of long term benefits coming out of the package of measures proposed by the developer. The compensation package is unrealistic and ill conceived.

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