

October 2009 News

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Latest News from Parkside Action Group ...

Prologis Put Plans On Hold
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On October 2nd 2009 PAG heard the excellent news that Astral (Prologis) had put their plans 'on hold' until further notice. Prologis released a statement saying 'prevailing economic conditions' had forced it to reconsider. ProLogis Development First Vice President Simon Jenkins said: 'It is wise for ProLogis to consider its options and determine how to proceed. The viability of the project has to be balanced against today's market circumstances - compared to five years ago when the project was conceived.'

PAG understand that Astral are examining changes to the master plan which may be structured around a smaller footprint perhaps submitted as a new application next year.

PAG would like to say thank you to all its supporters over the last 4 years that have helped bring us to this point. PAG will continue to contribute to the consultation process to ensure an acceptable outcome for the Parkside site and surrounding communities. The History of the Application So Far

PAG has always argued that the rail argument was a Trojan Horse for massive warehouses and HGV distribution. Since 2006 when the plans were first submitted, Astral has released a number of revisions of various planning documents right up to as late as last month in response to repeated criticism of missing and inaccurate information from various consultees, including PAG.

What became blatantly clear was that air quality would be severely adversely affected (their words not ours) and the road infrastructure couldn't cope with the anticipated traffic.

On the motorway Astral initially proposed moving M6 J22, then they added traffic lights to the motorway and site entry points, then they added extra slip roads, and finally they added hard shoulder running, together with 17 local road junction reconfigurations along the way.

Even after all that in their September 2009 traffic assessment they still couldn't explain how their vehicle number plate recognition system would be able to recognise HGV vehicles from anywhere in the UK or Europe and prevent HGV lorries from using our local roads.

In the end their own statement on the matter makes it clear that the financial position just wouldn't add up. How could all the upfront rail and road infrastructure be paid for with warehouse rents in the current economic climate? Who would occupy warehouses that were larger than anything else that had ever been built in the UK or even Europe maybe?

The jobs argument has been consistently misquoted by supporters of the application to mislead people to believe that Astral would offer St Helens 10,000 jobs, when in point of fact, because of Parkside's location on the very edge of the borough, it could only ever generate a fraction of that and would cause many people to have to relocate as existing logistics businesses were attracted to the development.

A recent report provided as part of St Helens Council Local Development Framework consultation stated that 'we estimate that Parkside would generate 270-330 jobs for St Helens residents by 2018' - well short of the mystical larger number. Where Do We Go From Here?

What Astral do next remains to be seen. If the developer continues with its current footprint it is difficult to see how it can be made to cohabit within the existing community.

In addition to their recent announcement Prologis stated that they would continue 'to work with the community', but in 2008 Astral informed PAG categorically that they were not prepared to answer any questions in writing from the organisation - hardly working with the community!

PAG will definitely celebrate a victory, but it recognises that the war may not be won, and is ready to pick up the fight again if Astral want to continue in the same vein in the future.