

MBC News release follows:

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Maidstone doesn't want Kent International Gateway

Maidstone Borough Council has acted quickly to set out its position on a proposal for a huge, 382,000 sq metre park with road to rail transfer facilities and associated business development at a site east of junction 8 of the M20 at Bearsted.

Kent International Gateway Ltd has written to residents in the area about its proposals and asked for their comments. They are unlikely to welcome the comments they get back, with reports of growing protests including objections from local MP Hugh Robertson, parish and borough councillors and residents.

Council leader Eric Hotson has been quick to set out Maidstone council's position on the proposal. "The proposal is inappropriate and not at all what we would want for this area"; he said.

The land is currently countryside with no proposals for change and Mr Hotson says the KIG plan would have a significant adverse impact on the

local area because of the scale and nature of the development. "It would create huge volumes of industrial traffic on our already busy roads and wouldn't create the good quality well paid jobs that we need to improve the prosperity of our borough".

In order to progress its proposals KIG would either have to submit them for consideration through the current local development framework process or submit a planning application in advance of going through that process. Any such planning application would be dealt with on its merits and in accordance with current development plan policies.

Maidstone Borough Council made clear its objections to the proposal at last December's examination in public for the South East Plan. Assistant Director of Development, Brian Morgan, gave evidence to the enquiry that the proposal was in the wrong place and that there was no need for it. The Strategic Rail Authority's advice is that inter-modal freight depots of this type should be located on the M25 to provide easy access to and around London. Mr Morgan also argued that there wasn't a need for a depot of this type because only 30% of the existing capacity for freight had been taken up on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and there is lots of other spare capacity on the rail network.

ENDS

Thank you

Roger