

23rd July 2015

By email

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Hewitt's Industrial Estate - Outline Planning Application WA/2014/2384 - Objection

Cranleigh Chamber of Commerce has been representing the local business community since 1948. We draw our members from all sectors of the business, industrial and trading community ranging from large companies to sole traders, start-ups and retired individuals. Cranleigh Chamber is also an affiliated partner of the Surrey Chamber of Commerce.

Cranleigh Chamber of Commerce has consistently advocated that a balance between housing and employment land and commercial property must be achieved in Cranleigh. The Hewitt's proposal will result in the loss of yet more employment land in Cranleigh with the inevitability that it will become a commuter destination with increased congestion, a failed High Street, and it will lose its soul and identity as a great community in which to live and work.

Hewitts has been at the heart of Cranleigh's economy in recent history and has seen many local companies grow from small businesses to become large employers. There are numerous examples of firms that would have liked to stay but the landlords have effectively pushed them out.

To highlight just two of the businesses: P&P Glass, a multi million pound turnover, award winning business has had to re-locate and has been lost to the Bourough. Another, Youngs Furnishers, are still unsure of their future. There must be some acknowledgement that these are real businesses employing real people.

Businesses on Hewitts operate from a base of long-term local employees who have developed their skills over many years. Many of them also operate from a local client base, serving the local community.

From our local knowledge and understanding we are left to conclude that there has been a strategy to intentionally run the site down. To contend that there is no demand is disingenuous, the situation has been manipulated by lack of investment to ensure that the asset (because that is how it is viewed) can realise the potential offered by housing development.

With the recent announcements from government about using brownfield land as housing locations we feel that there is an ever-greater risk that this proposal may be approved. We cannot accept this although we realise we are only a group of business people in Cranleigh who want the best for the business and local community.

It would be productive for us to provide evidence of the need to keep Hewitt's as employment land. You have already received letters from tenants in response to the application who have been effectively and callously pushed out of the industrial estate so that the owners can claim the land is empty and there is no demand for commercial property.

We will set the scene to prove that losing the site is both contrary to Waverley's own policy and that there is a demand if we make it clear that Cranleigh is 'open for business' and not closed to it by approving this application.

Waverley Economic strategy 2015-2020

In it's own economic review Waverley has identified the Borough is "dominated by small and medium sized enterprises. Approximately 91% (88% nationally) are micro businesses employing fewer than 10 people". It also states that there are higher than average levels of self-employment 12% (10% nationally).

The Borough has a higher than average proportion of younger businesses, 45% being up to 10 years old (35% nationally) and 76% being up to 10 years old (58% nationally)

In short Waverley is a hotbed of small enterprise that should be fostered through all stages of growth, central to growth is the need for premises. Hewitts, despite it's run down state currently, remains an ideal commercial location, within walking/cycling distance of a large number of houses and the High Street.

Waverley Borough Local Plan (2002) contains 'saved policies' in the absence of a new local plan and we would draw your attention to the highly relevant comment that "The Plan seeks to safeguard existing suitably located industrial and commercial land". What is Hewitts if it does not fall in to that category?

Surrey Growth Narrative

Surrey County Council and the 11 local district and borough councils signed up this week to agree an inward investment strategy which is targeting high value, knowledge based firms in sectors where there is already a Surrey advantage in a way which will not damage the natural environment. There is a paper called 'Business Case for the Surrey Growth Narrative', a copy of which is in the possession of Waverley's CEO. (We, or Surrey county council, can provide a copy to the planning department, if necessary). Cranleigh already has a strong CDIT (Creative Digital Information Technology) cluster of businesses which clearly fits within the aspirations of the Surrey Growth Narrative to attract new businesses and for further growth of existing businesses. Hewitt's would be an ideal location for such growth.

We would draw Waverley Council's attention to the summary.

“Surrey competes for business in a highly competitive global market place. Competitor locations are increasingly adopting proactive approaches to inward investment and Surrey risks losing existing companies to other areas within the UK and also internationally. The Growth Narrative programme represents the next developmental stage of the activity that has been pursued through ‘Invest in Surrey’ to secure increasing levels of investment in the area. This will work to:

- *Facilitate the expansion of existing businesses within the county*
- *Attract new inward investment into Surrey's niche sectors which offer the greatest potential for growth*
- *Attract inward investment into vacant premises and town centre regeneration opportunities*
- *Support action to retain existing businesses in the county*

This will be achieved through collaboration and investment from local authorities, universities and the private sector to:

- *Market Surrey nationally and internationally as a place to do business, targeting ‘smart’ companies who will add high value on a small footprint*
- *Provide a ‘soft landing’ of support arrangements for potential investors*
- *Increase capacity for key account management of existing business*

Success will be seen in securing timely investment in the right places across the county and in sectors that have the scope to grow strongly and build further the strengths of the economy. By this we mean a focus on ‘smart growth’. I.e. achieving ‘more for less’ by driving economic growth through knowledge and creativity to increase productivity without damaging the environment. This will lead to an increase in business rates and employment across the county, increasing community cohesion and wellbeing.”

Gatwick Diamond

The Waverley Economic strategy 2015-2020 acknowledges and quotes the Enterprise M3 Strategy for Growth 2013 but, perhaps because Cranleigh is the smallest of the 4 Waverley economic hubs, completely overlooks the fact that the Borough also abuts the Gatwick Diamond. This is a sad oversight but of great importance when understanding Cranleigh and Hewitts in the wider context.

The Gatwick Diamond economic area (part of the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership) neighbours Cranleigh and it should be noted on their location map that Cranleigh is deemed to be included on the edge of the Diamond.

We asked the Executive Director of the Gatwick Diamond Initiative (the GDI), Rosemary French, for statistics regarding demand in the area. She is a lead official responsible for handling enquiries from global and UK companies seeking a location in the Gatwick Diamond. She provided the following information.

In 2014, there were 22 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) enquiries seeking approximately 38,000 sq. metres in total. This is an increase by comparison with 2013, when there were 17 such enquiries. These are enquiries via UK Trade & Investment, local councils, or direct requests to the Gatwick Diamond Initiative, where specific requests have been made to locate within 25 miles of Gatwick. We note also that Cranleigh is only 18 miles from Gatwick and could be considered as a location. The table below breaks down these enquiries by source, size requirement and sector.

Foreign Direct Investment Enquiries to the Gatwick Diamond 2014

Source	Size (sq. feet)	Sector
UK – 12	Less than 1,000 – 5	Professional Services -10
US – 3	1,000 to 5,000 – 5	Advanced Manufacturing – 5
Eire – 2	5,000 to 10,000 – 3	Food Production – 3
Spain	10,000 to 20,000 – 1	Energy Technologies – 2
Portugal	20,000 to 40,000 – 3	Health Technologies – 1
Italy	40,000 to 100,000 – 4	Logistics -1
New Zealand	Total Office – 117,500 sq. ft.	
Israel	Total Manufacturing – 289,500 sq. ft	
	Total – 407,000 sq. ft. = 38,000 sq. metres	

The Gatwick Diamond has a current known outstanding requirement for 7,500 to 9,300 sq. metres of office space that cannot be fulfilled. The GDI said that this year the number of enquiries for small office space for start-ups or small growing businesses is much higher compared to 2014. The serviced office provision which is required by these firms is all full, and the Permitted Development Rights (PDR) proposals being granted throughout the area is resulting in hundreds of small to medium sized businesses losing their offices with no hope of relocating in the area.

The other noticeable trend in 2015 is that 9,700 sq. metres of office and light industrial space has been requested by businesses already based here and wanting to expand in the area. The GDI are strongly supporting the proposed 500,000 sq. ft. new business park in North Horsham although this will not nearly be big enough to cope with the current demand for fast growing Gatwick Diamond businesses to relocate, never mind inward investment enquiries. The GDI has a list of those businesses by name which they cannot disclose for confidentiality reasons. The Cranleigh Chamber notes that this business park could also be a magnet for businesses displaced or unable to start up in Cranleigh. That would cause further congestion on the A281 and adversely affect the High Street.

Proven demand for commercial property

Finally we would draw attention to the recent development of modern units for mixed business use at the entrance to Littlemead in Cranleigh. These are fully occupied and clearly demonstrate that, contrary to the message coming from Hewitts, there is demand for commercial property of the right kind – well designed, attractive and flexible.

To conclude, we would urge councillors not to be swayed by the current overwhelming need for additional housing alone. There is a concurrent need for employment land and commercial property of all types.

For all the reasons set out in this letter Cranleigh Chamber of Commerce strongly objects to the proposal for 120 dwellings on the Hewitt's site.

Yours sincerely

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