

JUDGE ORDERS SECRETARY OF STATE TO RECONSIDER DISMISSAL OF STRATEGIC RAILFREIGHT INTERCHANGE APPLICATION AT RADLETT

A ruling in the High Court on 1 July 2011 gives developers Helioslough a fresh chance at securing planning permission for the 3.5 million-square metre scheme in the Green Belt on the former Radlett Airfield at Park Street. The application has already been the subject of two costly planning inquiries.

After the second public inquiry into St Albans District Council's refusal of the scheme, in late 2009, the planning inspector recommended it should be given the go-ahead. Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Eric Pickles overruled him on the grounds that a similar proposal in Colnbrook, Slough, could meet the need for the site with less environmental damage.

Pickles' decision was quashed by His Honour Judge Milwyn Jarman on the basis of one of four grounds of challenge put forward by Helislough Ltd. The judge found that the Secretary of State did not properly explain his reasons for disagreeing with the Planning Inspector's recommendation that the proposed development be allowed. The other three grounds put forward at the hearing by Helislough Ltd were rejected by the Judge.

If permission is granted the terminal will include parking for thousands of cars, five large warehouses - one as big as Heathrow's Terminal Five - and a new bypass for Park Street.

Objectors, including campaign group STRiFE, have cited unsustainable increases in traffic and disruption to the Thameslink Line among their many reasons for opposition. CPRE Hertfordshire has supported local campaign group STRiFE and submitted written representations to the Inspector.

Neither the Secretary of State nor St Albans District Council have sought leave to appeal the decision. The next step will now be for the Secretary of State to re-determine the planning application, and he should invite written submissions from the principal parties before doing so. CPRE Herts. is monitoring events and liaising with STRiFE.

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