

**APPEAL BY ISLAND GAS LTD, PORTSIDE
ELLESMERE PORT**

APPEAL REFERENCE APP/A0665/W/18/3207952

**ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY
SUMMARY PROOF**

BY

David Plunkett M.Sc



(THIS PAGE HAS BEEN LEFT BLANK)

EXPERIENCE

My name is David Plunkett. I have a Masters degree in Management from Manchester Polytechnic, now Manchester Metropolitan University. My early experience was as a computer programmer and systems analyst in England in a number of commercial organisations, and then in Alberta Canada for the provincial telephone company.

I started teaching IT in 1980 at North Worcestershire College, and then moved to Macclesfield College as team leader in 1983. In 1986 I joined Cheshire County Council as an ICT Development Officer to introduce ICT systems into all seven Cheshire colleges for staff, students, and College Management Information Systems. My roles involved system set-up and implementation by working with both lecturers and management at all levels.

In 1992 I became Research and Statistics Manager for Cheshire County Council Education Services, involved in performance statistics, forecasting, and profiling information for policy and management decisions. I retired in 2007.

Introduction

1. My evidence shows how Ellesmere Port is part of a range of plans, partnerships, and policies, all designed to achieve future sustainable economic growth for the town. In my evidence those plans, partnerships and policies are listed in a hierarchy from local to global, and each section in which I discuss them shows a consistent set of factors to achieve the intended benefits for our town, Ellesmere Port, and for our region. My evidence shows how Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC) consistently supports that. It explains that the Planning Committee decision in January 2018 is entirely consistent with all initiatives and aspirations from the Local Plan through to the United Nations Development Goals, which all recognise that sustainability will be achieved for communities by developments that support clean energy.
2. While the wording may differ slightly, the ideals proposed by every one of these plans, boards, partnerships and development projects are consistent. Many of the same stakeholders will be involved, and plans may overlap. They all propose exciting, attractive projects and hi-tech developments to benefit residents and the community, attract employment, and improve and sustain growth and opportunities for the future. There are common visions or missions from each.

Local Context

3. Ellesmere Port, like every town, city and region, has major long-term aspirations to build sustainable growth and enterprise for the residents and community. This is a highly competitive process, locally, regionally, and even internationally. It is the basis of economic sustainability for the future. Considerable effort is expended by business and governments to define their sites and partnerships, and to present themselves as the perfect choice, and in turn attract further development.

4. The current government policy is to support a variety of energy sources to develop the country's energy mix, as we move to a clean and renewable future in line with Climate Change obligations. Some may well seem contradictory to the public at large. The government has made clear its support for onshore shale gas exploration. But as with all developments, it is the duty of the Planning Authority to consider the specific impact on the proposed location. In refusing the application, CWAC were mindful that the particular economic and social conditions in Ellesmere Port place it at a disadvantage in the competition to attract the industries of the future on which a sustainable economy will depend.

Plans, Partnerships and Policies

5. The CWAC Local Plan is the most significant locally. It is particularly frank and clear in recognising that Ellesmere Port is one of the lesser developed areas within a fairly affluent council, and therefore is in greater need of development within CWAC. The CWAC Energy and Carbon Reduction Strategy 2016 to 2020, has the subtitle “**Save, Generate, Sustain**”, and the logo of “**low co2uncil**”. The Energy and Carbon Reduction Plan 2016 – 2020 is emphatic on the need for sustainability, mentioning “sustainability” 28 times and “renewables” 18 times.

6. I also discuss the Ellesmere Port Development Board; the Cheshire Science Corridor Enterprise Zone; the Northern Powerhouse, the UK Industrial Strategy, the National Infrastructure Commission, the UK Clean Growth Strategy, the EU Sustainable Development Strategy and the UN Development Goals. Finally, I

discuss the Paris Agreement and the IPCC Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change “Summary for Policymakers”.

Common Themes

7. All of these vision statements and mission statements have the same themes of growth, local confidence, and sustainability. In particular, they all focus on cutting greenhouse emissions, generating high tech jobs that lead the drive into a low carbon future.
8. Employment and housing are the common key to these developments. The designation of the land at Portside has recently been changed to “*Mixed Industrial/ Residential Development*”, and houses have been built nearby. Any extractive industry is not suitable for nearby housing.
9. Furthermore the IGas site will not produce the number of jobs referred to in the 2015 Employment Density Guide. These aspirations for Ellesmere Port will never succeed if the M53 and M56 which links the area becomes associated with drilling boreholes and unconventional oil and gas production.
10. Companies and organisations looking at where they may start their new developments, are wooed and pursued by the development organisations and boards above. Success breeds success. Attracting continued growth and industry is critical, which is why governments, councils and partnerships spend so much time and effort on it. But, companies and organisations will not re-locate if Ellesmere Port is not an attractive location. Jobs will not be created, opportunities will be missed, and development, and more importantly sustainable future development, will go elsewhere. With unconventional gas extraction, the economic future of Ellesmere Port is in jeopardy. What matters is the sustainable future not the immediate short term.
11. Councils and Enterprise Zones will inevitably have a preference for clean, hi tech industries that are sustainable. These encourage links with local universities and colleges for training, and offer significant local employment options for existing residents.

12. On the other hand, large corporations and companies like IGas only have an interest in their own balance sheet. IGas fail to mention the economic benefits to Ellesmere Port, only to themselves. Their presentation is more one of getting past planning objectives, rather than being part of the community.

Economic Development and Sustainable Development

13. Ellesmere Port offers economic development features which can be found in the presentations and websites for the above plans, boards and development zones. In differing ways, with different wording, but always with the same objectives in mind, these proposals all seek to build on the same key elements of employment, housing, regeneration, education and training and social development. In all of the best models, housing and employment are now designed to be separate, but with good public transport links. The IGas exploratory drilling, with their purpose of unconventional hydrocarbon extraction, will make the area of Ellesmere Port, South Wirral and North Cheshire unattractive.
14. North Cheshire may even become notorious. Some of the current and proposed developments include those at Capenhurst (Uranium Waste Management, and Dismantling Programme for nuclear submarine nuclear reactors), and Elton and Ince (waste incineration and waste recycling).
15. This site at Portside is the opposite of sustainable. As a well site for Unconventional Oil and Gas it has been sterilised for employment and job creation since 2011 and will continue to be so for the duration of this development. It will also be so into the future since it will be impossible to build on land with a well-site that has been developed, due to the risk of fugitive gas (methane and radon) entering buildings.
16. The CWAC Planning Committee recognised that with this sort of low-tech development, many companies will not relocate here. Families will not want to live and bring up children in an area that is blighted by outdated industries. Families will avoid the health risks. There will be even fewer employment opportunities.

17. Sustainable development is now seen as much more than economic development. In 1987, the Bruntland Commission published “Our Common Future” in an effort to link the issues of economic development and environmental stability, and gave the definition adopted by the UN of sustainable development as: *“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs”*.
18. This means that we should not compromise the Sherwood Aquifer, nor the adjacent RAMSAR site. We should employ the “Precautionary Principle” and not proceed where there are questions over the impact on the environment, health and social cohesion.

Conclusion

19. CWAC is quite clear that Ellesmere Port needs sustainable development, but this is not the same as economic development at any price.
20. At the Planning Committee in January 2018 dealing with this application, and more recently at the Council meeting in October 2018 dealing with the proposal to redefines non-hydraulic fracturing shale gas exploration as permitted development, it is clear that CWAC has the utmost consideration for the health and wellbeing of the community and the residents.
21. IGas’s proposed development is not the development needed now or in the future in Ellesmere Port. It will provide fewer jobs, and the dangers it poses will make Ellesmere Port unattractive for further new employment, which is the widely recognised key to Economic Sustainability.

David Plunkett

December 2018