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16 March 2022

Dear Sirs

PUBLIC CONSULTATION REPONSE ON BEHALF OF STONEY STANTON PARISH COUNCIL HINCKLEY NATIONAL RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This submission is made to augment the completed questionnaire to the current public consultation for the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange (NRFI) on behalf of Stoney Stanton Parish Council. For clarification, Stoney Stanton Parish lies to the immediate east of the proposed Hinckley NRFI site, to the east of the M69. The proposal therefore has the potential to have a significant impact upon the setting of the village and the daily lives of residents of Stoney Stanton.

1.2 As I am sure you would expect, there are a number of areas of major concern from Stoney Stanton Parish Council in respect of the current proposals. These are articulated through this response, with professional input as necessary. The overarching concern is the quantum of development proposed and whether it represents overdevelopment; the concerns within each heading then feed into the final conclusion/concern at the end of this response.

2.0 Location Options

The need for the facility appears to rely upon the Leicester and Leicestershire Authorities Report Warehousing and Logistics in Leicester and Leicestershire: Managing Growth and Change (April 2021). This report identifies three locations for potential rail-linked and road only connected employment sites (Figure 15). This report continues, noting that there is no hierarchy in respect of the various opportunity areas noted, and that these are identified *"in order to maintain and enhance Leicestershire's competitive position"* in the employment market (paragraph 11.11). The identified need in this specific location is not therefore underpinned by a national requirement for a facility, but merely as a desire of the local authorities to ensure a strong position is maintained for employment distribution sites. It is appreciated that it may align in principle with the national aims, but seemingly with no support for this specific location.

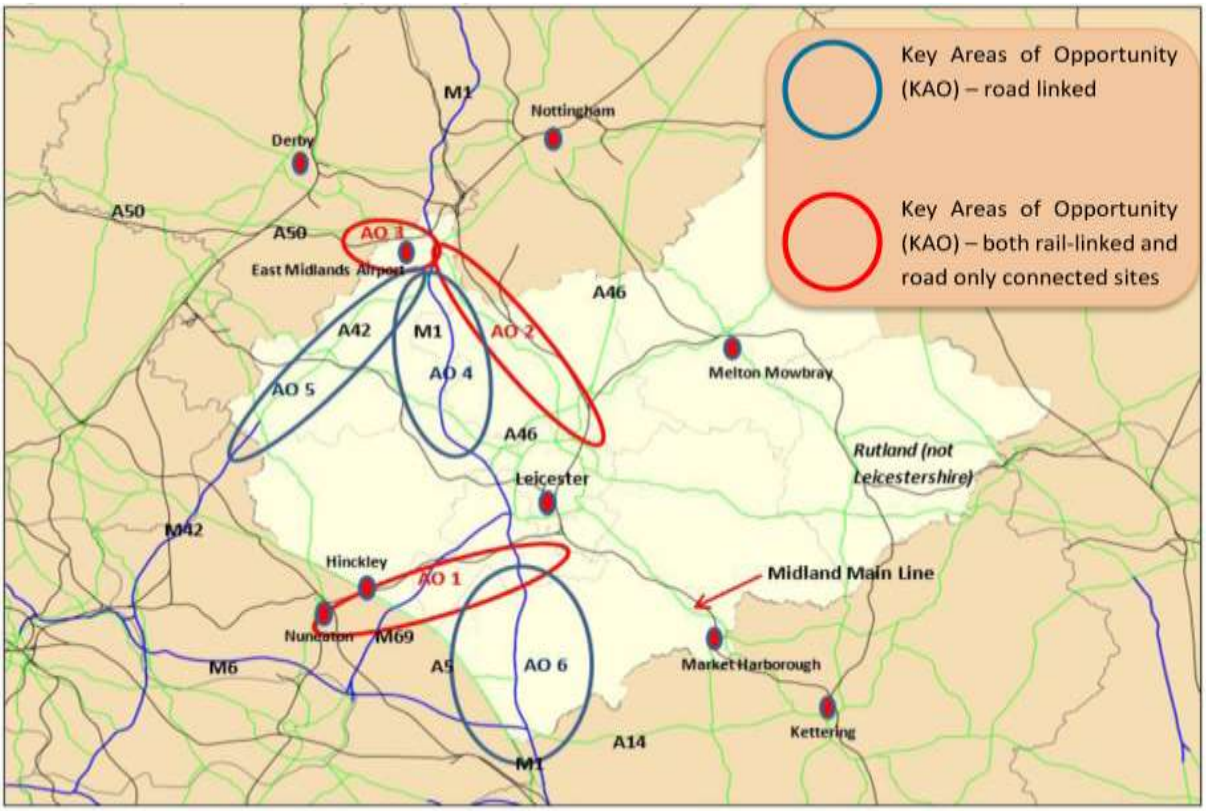

Figure 15 (page 133) of Leicester and Leicestershire Authorities Report Warehousing and Logistics in Leicester and Leicestershire: Managing Growth and Change

The background policy context/support for this development coming forward raises two immediate questions/short-comings of the evidence base, which are considered in turn below.

The selected site and assessment undertaken has been based upon land within Leicestershire coming forward. Whilst the areas of opportunity as noted on Figure 15 of the Leicester and Leicestershire Authorities Warehousing and Logistics Report states that these areas are only indicative and not precise, it is clearly illustrating within Area A01 the desire to provide employment between Leicester and Hinckley, juxtaposed to the Leicester-Nuneaton trainline. The supporting text of paragraph 11.8 reconfirms the visualisation of Figure 15.

However, there is no particular reason why the boundary of Leicestershire needs to be taken as a sacrosanct search area. Such a facility could just as realistically be delivered between Hinckley and Nuneaton to meet the same localised desired need, just within Warwickshire. There is a section of land to the south of the A5 (trunk road) that has a straight section of railway line where a rail-lined facility could be delivered. The A5 offers a close, direct link back to the M69, with scope then to provide access to existing trunk roads to the north, south, east and west, without the need for expensive connecting roads or direct concerns of vehicles travelling through adjacent villages. No sites beyond Leicestershire appear to have been considered though; since this site would still offer the same benefits to the local area, this appears to be a major shortfall in the robustness of the initial consideration of sites to serve the Midlands area, a point noted repeatedly within the consultation documentation.

Secondly, this proposal is seeking to enable the expansion of rail freight, which would align with the national aims. The intention is for the terminal to provide interconnectivity between the rail and road freight. In this respect, if the main ethos is on the national function of the facility, consideration of where the predominant transport movements in the region occur should be given weight. The M69, whilst recognised as being a motorway, is very much a secondary highway, connecting Coventry to Leicester and as a result the M6 to the M1. Most traffic movements are either north/south along the M1, or east/west in the Midlands along the M6. The use of the M69 is significantly lower in traffic movements and importance; unless specifically serving a local area between the M6 and M1, alternative, more direct routes are available (such as the A42 trunk road from the M42 (Birmingham) towards the M1). The provision of any facility, realistically should only be serving a comparatively localised need for the southwestern part of Leicestershire/north-eastern part of Warwickshire. If it expands beyond this, then potentially detours along half the length of the M69 would be required for HGVs in order to connect between the rail facility and the final destination of any goods. In this respect, it is questionable whether this section of the railway network is the most appropriate location for any such facility and the quantum of HGV miles it would save, as many alternative miles would in fact be created.

For '*Leicestershire*', it is considered that the East Midlands Parkway Railway site, just to the north of the County, would represent a much better location to provide a larger rail interchange, rather than spread the facilities into multiple locations. The benefits for providing a larger facility in this location and removing the need for Hinckley NRFI are as follows:

- East Midlands Parkway has already had investment to enable growth to commence, allowing quick commencement on site/delivery of employment units.

- Enlarging existing infrastructure/provision of a larger scale development is a much more financially viable approach.

- This site already has good access to the key M1 infrastructure (Junction 24) motorway and a dualled trunk road connection via the A453.

- It has existing sustainable transport options constructed, due to the purpose-built new passenger railway station at East Midlands Parkway.

- It is deliverable in a location whereby no vehicles would need to travel within or close to any existing settlements.

In terms of the function of a rail terminal, provision of a facility which could serve more than one freight railway line would appear to be a sensible solution, in order to safeguard its use and maximise its return. The connection of the railway lines of the Felixstowe and Solent lines occur just to the northwest of the site. Any facility constructed to the northwest of Nuneaton/towards Tamworth would appear to offer a more secure investment opportunity compared to the Hinckley NRFI, whilst still using the capacity along the Leicestershire lines from Felixstowe. In this respect that are existing facilities such as Birch Coppice, Hams Hall and Birmingham that could be enlarged, with these locations already serving the Felixstowe port. Full assessment of the wider area has not been undertaken, despite the proposal being considered '*national infrastructure*'.

3.0 Highways

3.1 It is acknowledged that Tritax Symmetry are still undertaking highway modelling work with Leicestershire County Council. However, should any of the information proposed affect the highway solution or the upgrading of the various affected roads/junctions, then re-consultation should be undertaken with the public. Failure to do so would be prejudicing the public, a position already outlined to Tritax Symmetry by Councillor Terry Richardson, Leader of Blaby District Council.

3.2 A key overarching issue is that the intended function of the facility is currently unknown. Therefore, the exact level of vehicular movements is at best a rough estimate. The fact that the questionnaire is asking whether respondents would support the inclusion of a lorry park and refuelling station illustrates that the quantum of movements cannot be accurately confirmed. Discussion also over the operation of the facility to serve not only the units proposed, but also act as a centralised point for other containers to be collected by different companies, adds further ambiguity as to the number of HGV/vehicle movements associated with the facility; this additional function is also not clear from the information presented and thus may not be recognised as a feature of the proposal by many of the general public. Expecting a proposal to be commented on when the operational function has not been fixed and is ambiguously presented is therefore somewhat difficult and fraught with potential inaccuracies, in terms of the technical information presented for consultation.

3.3 Concern over the layout of the site operations forms an overarching issue for the new A47 link road. The design for all the units without a direct rail link (which is 5 of the 9 units as currently shown on the masterplan) would need to have their goods transferred from the rail interchange on vehicles that traverse the new A47 link road roundabout. This seems a less than ideal solution, with scope for unnecessary conflict with users of the proposed public highway (a highway safety issue). Any accident or delay on the public highway would also undermine the ability for the employment park to operate efficiently. A better solution surely would be to allow any such goods movements to the warehouse units to occur within the employment park itself, away from the main public highway.

3.4 In terms of the highways information that has been presented, from an overview perspective the written Preliminary Environmental Information Report and supporting technical reports present a different position to that stated at the consultation events (presentation information/verbal communication by BWB Highway representatives). Supposedly, all HGV movements from the new development would be directed via the key highway roads (M69 primarily) and not via the secondary roads which run through the surrounding villages. These are highlighted on Figure 17 of the Interim Transport Report as '*HGV desirable routes*' and '*HGV undesirable routes*', with the latter noted to include routes through Stoney Stanton, Sapcote, Barwell, Burbage/Hinckley and Narborough. Ensuring no vehicles come via these routes even with a Travel Plan etc in place is very difficult for Tritax Symmetry to enforce, particularly if container collection is offered, as there is even less ability to control the routes taken by such vehicles. Tritax Symmetry have made reference to the ability to use an Automatic Number Plate Recognition System to control the routes taken, but even this would be difficult to enforce for the HGVs and impossible to control any employee movements, which are likely to be in the thousands every day, given the lack of any public transport or safe ability to travel by non-car borne modes.

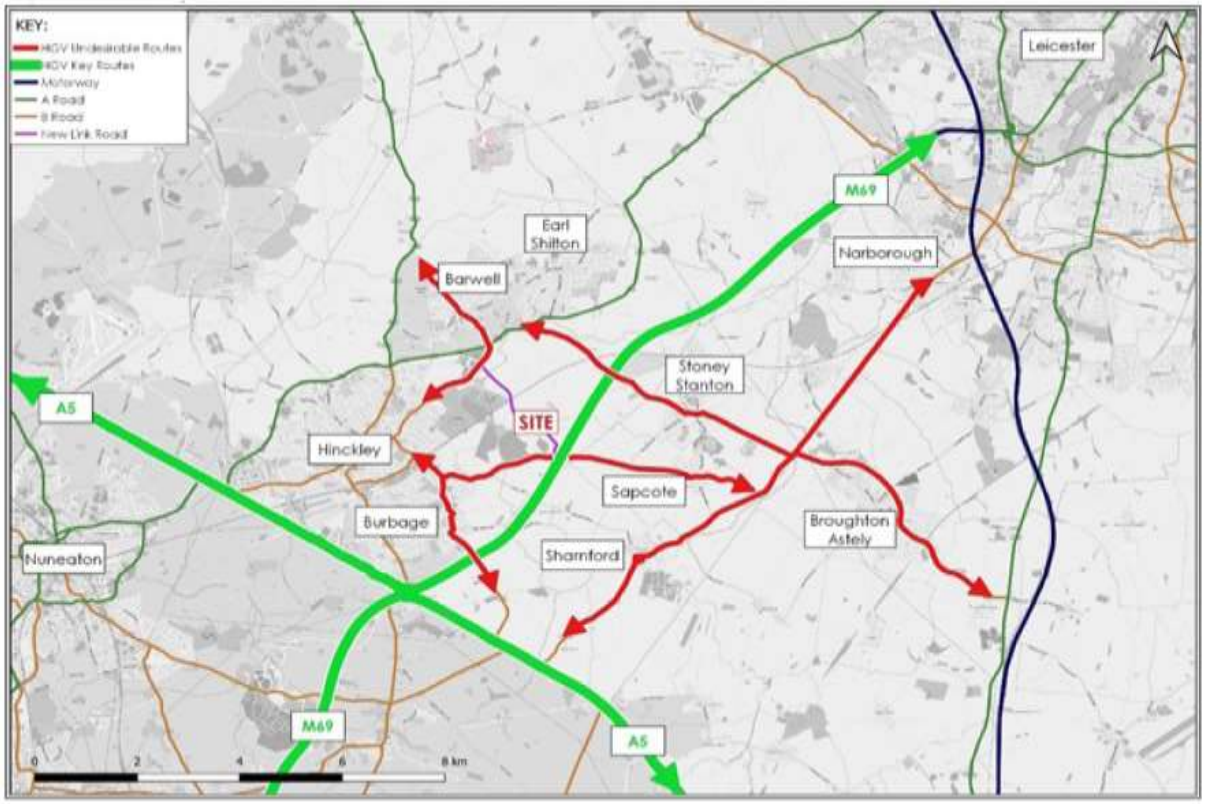

Figure 17 (page 43) of PEIR *Appendix 8.1 Interim Transport Assessment*

3.5 Notwithstanding the position presented at the consultation events, it has been indicated within the PEIR Chapter 8: Transport and Traffic section at Table 8.5 (page 8-44) that there would be quite considerable increases in HGVs along many of these roads. This includes in the centre of Sapcote on the B4669 Hinckley Road between Stanton Lane and Sharnford Road (+236.4% change), with the expected level of growth with and without development cited. The development, whether bringing this traffic directly or indirectly is therefore having a very significant impact upon the surrounding highways and settlements, regardless of the intentions of the proposals. This then leads to a second very important question on whether a new bypass should be provided around Sapcote, to mitigate against this severe increase in HGV traffic, as well as increased traffic levels as a whole.

3.6 It has been indicated verbally that the provision of a bypass is not included as this would seek to direct all cross country rural traffic onto a single route and cause harm to other communities, such as Narborough and Sharnford on the B4114 further to the north and south respectively. However, this cross country travel already occurs along a number of routes through Sapcote and Stoney Stanton mainly, which lead towards the B4114 and then through Narborough/Sharnford. Both of the B4114 settlements are recognised as having pollution levels, due to vehicle movements, above acceptable limits. As a result of this proposal, it would simply be exacerbated due to the improved access off the B4668/from Hinckley and across to the Tritax Symmetry site. By creating a full upgrade to the M69 Junction 2 and inclusion of a new A47 link, it is already creating this new desirable route. Unfortunately, it is not a full transport route proposed, which is then leaving the existing highway network to cope with the extensive new traffic using only small junction upgrades rather than any meaningful solution to the east of the application site. It would appear potentially

that a bypass to Sapcote needs to be included, and if the B4114 at Narborough and Sharnford are also secondary major issues, perhaps additional bypasses in order to enable the development to appropriately come forward. The full implications need to be assessed and resolved; certain key matters cannot simply be ignored. This approach seeks to reinforce the suggestion that alternative sites may be much better suited to accommodate employment of the scale proposed.

3.7 Exactly how the proposed M69 Junction 2 upgrade and link road sits in respect of the Leicester and Leicestershire's Strategic Growth Plan to 2050 (published December 2018) is also unclear. That proposal is showing an A46 expressway link between the M69 to the M1 and as an arc around the eastern side of Leicester to the existing A46 (the dashed green line on the plan below). Integrated connectivity should be sought for any new major infrastructure proposed. If such discussion has occurred, it is not evidenced within the information currently presented by Tritax Symmetry. The connectivity with this overarching infrastructure delivery, as set out jointly by the Leicestershire Authorities, is seen as '*critical*' to the Growth Plan's strategy. To simply ignore it would undermine the aims of the whole County on this matter.

Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan (2018): Essential Infrastructure (Figure 7)

3.8 A major problem within the area from a highway perspective is the capacity issues of the key junctions on the motorways and trunk roads. This includes the M69 Junction 3/M1 Junction 21 to the north near Leicester, whilst the M69 Junction 1 is also now experiencing increased traffic levels/delays following the opening of the DPD depot. Delay at these junctions, and in particular the intersection of the M1/M69 has significant delays at the pm rush hour and thus cross country rural routes are used as quicker alternatives. The proposal is suggesting the creation of an extra 8,400 new jobs at the Hinckley NRFI, in a location where

most workers are likely to drive to. If the key highway links are not improved before these additional vehicles are added, then the majority of these additional users would use the cross country routes, regardless of whether any bypass route is created to the east of the Hinckley NRFI. It would however, appear from the assessment undertaken, that the M69 Junction 3 and M69/M1 junction has not been assessed and no upgrades are proposed. This undermines the whole basis of the highway strategy to direct traffic towards the M69; if the northbound junction does not flow at certain times of the day, then alternative routes will be selected by the majority of drivers, including potentially HGVs. This is a fundamental shortfall of the current proposal and would have very significant impacts upon the surrounding communities, to which no meaningful solutions are proposed.

3.9 In terms of the impact assessment, a number of errors are considered to be incorporated, and as a result have skewed the resultant level of harm stated. Three junctions/highway sections in particular are outlined below.

New Road/Broughton Road/Sapcote Road/Long Street, Stoney Stanton

3.10 Within the PEIR Appendix 8.1 Interim Transport Assessment it is noted in Table 36 (page 75) the sites where the flow changes and highway impacts are noted to exceed the 5% level. For such junctions, highway improvement works should be undertaken to mitigate the additional traffic. The roundabout in the centre of Stoney Stanton between New Road, Broughton Road, Sapcote Road and Long Street is identified as a '*red junction*' where a highway impact will occur (referenced as Junction 18). However, no mitigation is proposed and this junction is not even mentioned within the mitigation section. When this issue was raised at the consultation events, the answer provided by BWB was that no solution was found to improve the junction as its quite constrained from a land perspective, so nothing is proposed. This cannot be an acceptable conclusion on the matter.

3.11 If the proposal has an impact upon an existing highway or junction, then it needs to be mitigated in order to accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (paragraph 110). Failure to deal with transport in the centre of the adjoining village at the key cross road junction cannot be considered an acceptable solution. It will have an unacceptable impact upon Stoney Stanton, and if this junction cannot be improved then an alternative overall highway solution should have to be placed forward. This issue simply cannot be ignored as currently occurring.

Stanton Lane/Hinckley Road, Stoney Stanton

3.12 Table 8.5 of the PEIR Chapter 8 (page 8-44) considers that the development will have a '*minor*' impact upon this highway. However, the baseline information considers that the site is not near to sensitive receptors thus even though the magnitude of change is noted to be major, the significance is noted as '*minor*'. Reviewing Table 8.2 and the accompanying plan, Figure 8.1, (pages 8-18 and 8-19) on sensitivity, the location is noted as moderate. This reflects the presence of '*traffic flow sensitive receptors*' as included within the specified list. Whilst it is not a closed list, the presence of a doctors' surgery, footpaths that are constrained in width due to parked vehicles on both sides and its close proximity to the primary school and retail centre at the end of this highway route, all support the provision of this location warranting a moderate receptor level. Moreover, this highway route is located within the 20 mph school zone to Manorfield Primary School, which has a pedestrian access route that leads directly onto the affected Hinckley Road. Proximity to schools is considered to be major sensitivity receptors. Referencing it as minor, is therefore woefully underplaying the current situation.

3.13 As set out within Table 8.4 'Determination of significance' a moderate sensitivity and a major magnitude of change correlates to a '*major*' level of significance. If a major sensitivity is considered to occur, then this reconfirms the major level of significance that would occur. Regarding it as '*minor*' in Table 8.5 is massively under-estimating the impact based upon the information provided by the Tritax Symmetry consultant. This needs to be rectified, particularly given the upgrades proposed, whilst welcomed in themselves, will only seek to make the route more attractive to vehicular users and then exacerbate the issues identified with the New Road/Broughton Road/Sapcote Road/Long Street roundabout junction as noted above and increase as a result the potential highway safety harm to the sensitive receptors of the primary school and retail units in the village.

B4669 Hinckley Road, Sapcote (between Stanton Lane and Sharnford Road)

3.14 As noted for the Stoney Stanton junction, this section of highway has also been down-played in terms of its sensitivity by the technical consultants. This section of the B4669 incorporates the central part of Sapcote and the village to the west of this. This includes the village's main recreation ground with play park (with direct access onto the B4669 – a major receptor), a children's day nursery and the retail units including the Co-Operative Supermarket (moderate receptors). Table 8.2 also cites '*roads with narrow footways that are used frequently by pedestrians*' as a moderate sensitivity receptor. The pavements close to the tight S-bend in the centre of the village clearly accord with this description. These footpaths are located between the retail facilities, sports facilities and form the key crossing points to the B4669, offering access to the primary school for the dwellings to the north of this classified road. Adjacent to 1 Church Street, the footpath is less than 1.0 metre in width for a length of 30 metres, with it disappearing completely at the junction with Church Street. This affects the use of the footpath on the southern side of this route, providing a dangerous section of highway for all users and one that is impossible to use for anyone with a pushchair or wheelchair. On the northern side, the footpath is also substandard in width (1.0 metre or less) for a section 50 metres in length adjacent to 2 Leicester Road and 3 Park House Court. This is on the northern side of the highway and is on the inside of a bend, offering poor visibility to users of the footpath. Given the high number of vehicles that use the B4669, including public buses and HGVs, it is clear that this footpath is substandard but frequently used as there are no alternatives.

Photograph showing the footpath adjacent to 1 Church Street, Sapcote adjacent to the B669 (southern side). Here the footpath is less than 1.0 metre wide and reduces down to nothing on the junction.

Photograph showing the footpath adjacent to 2 Leicester Road and 3 Park House Court, Sapcote adjacent to the B669 (northern side). Here the footpath is less than 1.0 metre wide on the inside of the highway bend.

3.15 The BWB Transport Report notes on Figure 8.1 that this highway section is minor in terms of its sensitivity, whereas Table 8.5 notes that it is not near to sensitive receptors. The substandard footpaths, presence of retail facilities and direct access from the main equipped playing field all suggest that this is incorrect. In accordance with the sensitivity criteria set out in Table 8.2, the retails and footpaths would elevate it to '*moderate*', and the playground would elevate it to a '*major*' sensitivity receptor. Table 8.5 then confirms that the percentage change in vehicles of 91.2% and 236.4% increase for HGVs means that the magnitude of change is '*major*'. With a correct sensitivity assessment incorporated the matrix included as Table 8.4 confirms that regardless of whether the sensitivity is considered moderate or major, the impact is major.

3.16 The scale of the impact outlines the fact that substantial works are required to rectify the situation upon the B4669 for Sapcote. The current situation would destroy this village and it cannot be considered acceptable. It would appear, as a minimum, provision of a bypass needs to be fully analysed.

Highway Conclusions

3.17 It is considered that there are significant shortcomings in the highway information provided to date. It incorporates a number of errors which need to be rectified and omissions that need to be appropriately considered. To simply ignore junctions where it would be difficult to facilitate the upgrades necessary is a fundamental failure of the proposal. Clarification of exactly what is to be delivered on site is also required in order to ensure appropriate mitigation can be proposed. Given the proposal is for national infrastructure, an overarching view as to how this proposal sits against the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Infrastructure Plan to 2050 must also occur.

3.18 The highways solutions proposed at present are considered to fall notably short of the works necessary to appropriately enable the delivery of the Hinckley NRFI without causing permanent harm to the surrounding highways and settlements, which is contrary to the NPPF, National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) and Blaby Local Plan.

Additional Highways Inaccuracies

3.19 In addition to the specific technical impacts of the proposal, it is necessary to highlight the inconsistency and over-emphasis being made on the removal of HGV miles from the public highway. The covering information provided by Tritax Symmetry in all their documentation and presentation material repeatedly suggests 1.6 billion HGV kilometres would be removed (cira 994 million miles). However, the BWB Highways report notes at Table 7.7, page 8-68 that there would be 83 million miles saved. The difference between these two figures is extensive and appears to be drastically over emphasising the reduction in HGV movements to anyone not looking at the technical report.

3.20 However, even the mileage savings noted in the Highways report appears excessive if the information available on the Felixstowe Port website (http://www.portoffelixstowe.co.uk) is considered. This notes that 100 million HGV movements are saved in a year across the 76 trains that depart the Port daily. This would suggest that 1.316 million transport miles are saved per train over a year (100/76), so if up to 16 trains a day would serve Hinckley NRFI then this would equate to 21.05 million HGV miles per year. This is roughly a quarter of the figure stated in the BWB report and only a tiny fraction of that stated in the benefits sections of the Tritax Symmetry information. These figures are massively misleading.

4.0 Ecology

4.1 It is noted that there has been much work undertaken on ecology and protected species surveys as required by English and European legislation. However, it appears as if this is simply being undertaken to '*tick the box*', without full consideration of the impact being considered.

4.2 The site is noted to be adjacent to Burbage Common and Woods, which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as well as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). Two other LWSs are partly located within the site (Field Rose Hedgerow and Elmsthorpe Plantation Hedgerow). Whilst these are all maintained on site and provided with a green buffer to enable additional planting (which is understandably welcomed), the remainder of the site is completely lost to nature, with all existing features eradicated. This includes 14.3 kilometres of hedgerows (figure calculated from the Biodiversity Impact Assessment information, which does not tally with the PEIR Table 12.5), a significant quantum of foraging grasslands and existing watercourses. These areas are known for bat and bird breeding and foraging grounds, with specific reference to the importance of the hedgerows for foraging. The PEIR even identifies that the loss of the hedgerow and absence of '*further mitigation*' results in a significant negative effect at a District level (paragraph 12.145 of the PEIR).

4.3 Bats are a protected species, and whilst birds are not, there is recognition in the evidence that a number of Red and Amber listed birds use the land for foraging and nesting, and thus the loss of these natural features will have a significant impact upon both bats and birds.

4.4 There are also Great Crested Newts using ponds close to the site, and a badger sett on the edge of the site. These protected species are likely to use the grassland and internal water bodies as part of their habitats. The complete removal of the grassland and five ponds is likely to harm the linear routes for newts and other amphibians, whilst the redirection of the unnamed stream on site into a canalised system adjacent to the M69 will remove the ability to recreate natural habitats for an array of creatures. The PEIR again identifies in paragraph 12.149 that this would have a significant negative effect at a Local level.

4.5 The development will also introduce a significant number of new vehicle movements close to known badger setts, risking them being killed by moving vehicles. This same issue would also be generated for the SSSI and LWS, particularly with the additional planting/green area proposed adjacent to the new A47 link, which would draw animals closer to this new highway. It is recognised that to protect the badgers, the sett will be lost, which must be viewed as a negative to this scheme.

4.6 For all fauna, the inclusion of extensive lighting will remove the current dark sky and affect breeding and feeding patterns. The lighting has been indicated to be required 24/7, given the constant operation of the units, and thus lighting of the estate and the new A47 link will have a harmful effect upon all species. The highway link in particular will be difficult to mitigate even by the installation of downward facing lights, given its elevated nature above the proposed additional green space proposed. This in part undermines the benefits generated by its creation.

4.7 In terms of the ecological assessment undertaken, the impact upon the existing habitats and associated wildlife is considered to be massively underplayed. Table 12.6 notes all as having no significant residual effects once mitigation and enhancement has been implemented. However, the quantum of habitat to be removed from the site is not appropriately replaced with higher quality green spaces in this location. Additional tree planting and meadows of higher quality that connect with the existing LWS/SSSI are welcomed, but there is a significant reduction in the scale of habitats proposed, with a high requirement for off-site contributions.

4.8 The Environmental Act 2021, and referenced in the NPPF, outlines a requirement for schemes to generate a 10% net gain in habitat units. The Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA) Calculations (NRFI Appendix 12.2) states that in order to achieve this, *"approximately 30 hectares of off-site arable land will need to be planted with a mosaic of meadow grassland, mixed scrub, woodland planting and ponds of either moderate or fairly good condition."* It also states that *"1.25km of 'native hedgerow' of 'poor' condition will need to be enhanced to 'native species-rich hedgerow with trees' of 'moderate' condition."* Strangely the BIA has not assessed the '*rivers*' category, which is a notable shortfall given the water bodies removed, altered and replaced on site.

4.9 The BIA results illustrate that either too much development is being proposed, or additional land holdings are required to deliver these habitat improvements to benefit all the fauna displaced by the extensive employment development. The quantum of the shortfall is extensive and as such a significantly negative impact upon ecology, biodiversity and protected species must be considered to occur. Given the scale of the development, the biodiversity gain should be provided on site, especially where there is scope to provide enhanced ecological areas as a sizable extension to an existing SSSI and numerous LWSs.

5.0 Drainage/Flood Risk

5.1 The indicative scheme design seeks to provide all the new buildings outside of Flood Zones 2 and 3, providing just the rail interchange within these higher zones. Whilst protection of the proposed buildings through their positioning outside of the flood zone is welcomed, it is surprising that the critical infrastructure considered of national importance is still incorporated within the flood zone, seemingly without protection. If the interchange, or even part of it, is under water, then essentially the function of the whole site cannot occur as planned for that period. A flood risk solution to prevent this occurring would appear the necessary starting point in order to allow the scheme to be justifiable. If this cannot be achieved,

either through a remodelled connection solution or repositioning the connection onto the national railway line, then perhaps yet again, this is not the correct site for such infrastructure.

5.2 In terms of the flooding of the site in question, there is photographic evidence of the site being flooded in recent years on multiple occasions. Some of these photographs are provided below and covered the area where the buildings are proposed. Incorrect assumptions/assessment of flood mapping appears to exist and thus this needs to be integrated into any proposal; it simply cannot be ignored. The proposal should fully consider the reasoning behind this flooding and the implications it would have upon any proposed scheme, including the drainage solution so that there are not potentially catastrophic issues elsewhere as a result.

Recent site flooding photographs adjacent to Burbage Common Road, near to Woodhouse Farm Shop; this flooding is within the area intended for the employment units to be built.

5.3 In terms of the design of the drainage scheme, there are three fundamental elements that need to be given careful additional consideration. The first relates to culverting of the existing unnamed stream to run along the edge of the M69. This culvert will be set above the level of the M69 and thus its design, capacity and maintenance programme needs to be robustly designed in order to prevent flooding of the motorway at a future date. This element is critical from a safety perspective so needs to be over-engineered to protect all users of the area.

5.4 The second major concern is the ability to store the surface water so that it can be discharged at an appropriate rate. The site is noted to be underlain principally by clay and mudstone with elements of sand and gravel that result in aquafers on the site. This means that the land, like the majority of Leicestershire

does not allow on-site soakaways. Appropriate levels of surface water storage are therefore required to offset the construction of circa 100 hectares of land largely with impermeable tarmacadam and roofs. This storage requirement is extensive and it needs to be appropriately delivered to prevent flooding both on site and further upstream. Again, the point about the M69 being set on lower ground becomes relevant to making sure this is appropriately designed to maintain highway safety. The site, like the surrounding area, is recognised to have a high water table, with initial investigative works suggesting a depth of between 3.1 and 3.9 metres for the ground water level (paragraph 3.37 of the Flood Risk Assessment – NRFI Appendix 14.1). Further investigation work, I am sure, is required as it may be that seasonally it is even closer to the surface than this. Nonetheless, the site is not flat and thus some cut and fill will be required to allow construction of the buildings, along with their foundations, resulting in only a narrow section of land below the buildings where surface water storage can be achieved. Insufficient information appears to have currently been undertaken to confirm that the suggested below ground storage of these waters can be delivered. If much, or even some of this needs to be delivered on the surface through additional water bodies, this will impact upon the quantum of development and therefore potentially the viability of the proposal. Understanding the drainage solution for the scheme is therefore important to the whole scheme.

5.5 Reflecting the high water table, ground level changes and water storage capacity concerns, the provision of the flood water ponds on the northern part of the site by the higher flood zone area represents the third concern. How much water can be accommodated within these appears unclear, and again, given the size of the development proposed, the ponds appear very small.

5.6 If the drainage solution is not correctly designed, there could be catastrophic implications to the surrounding area, including the dwellings on lower ground to the north of the site and the M69. This is a section of the proposal that needs significant additional justification to provide sufficient confidence that it can be delivered at the quantum of development designed.

6.0 Landscape & Noise

6.1 The development of a site at this scale will understandably have significant impact upon the character and appearance of the countryside location. However, the need to incorporate 6.0 metre high fences towards the northern end of the site illustrates an operational issue that is created due to the scale of the development resulting in its proximity to existing properties. Namely this is the provision of the railway line/sidings approximately 270 metres away from Swallow Cottage (Burbage Common Road, Elmsthorpe) and between 300 – 350 metres to the main core of Elmsthorpe. The provision of trains starting/stopping, with loading and unloading of cargo 24/7 is very different to trains on a line passing close to these noise sensitive receptors. The scheme will have a significant impact upon these residential properties and permanently change the character of Elmsthorpe. The scale of development offers the ability for only a strip of landscaping in this direction, relying on the harsh high boundary fencing to truncate the noise and visual impact. A much more substantive screen and separation should be provided to better protect the existing residential community to the north.

7.0 Air Quality

7.1 There are two areas to cite concern over in respect of air quality. Firstly, no information has been provided to date for the construction phase, as the highway modelling has not yet been finalised (paragraph 9.14 – 9.15). However, this does not assist the consultation, as it is impossible for the respondents to comment on how this development phase will impact the local area. The initial phase to construct the motorway

junction is likely to have the potential to cause greatest disturbance, due to the difficulty in routing vehicles via the key transport routes. The longevity of the construction phase, suggested to be 10 – 15 years at least, means that this is not a short term impact. Consultation should have been undertaken once this information was publicly available.

7.2 Reflecting the incomplete highway movement patterns, the resultant pollutant effects from additional vehicle emissions cannot at this stage be relied upon. Moreover, it is difficult to fathom how a doubling of traffic using certain key routes through nearby villages, does not result in any increase in particulates being generated. Put simply, this does not stack up.

7.3 It is hoped that the information will be reworked and public consultation undertaken upon the finalised documentation so that a correct situation can be presented; again, it is the local community that will have their health affected if this matter is not appropriately dealt with by the planning system, based upon factually accurate information.

8.0 Overall Scale of Development/Viability

8.1 No viability assessment has been provided as part of the consultation information. It has however been indicated that all supporting new and enhanced infrastructure would be paid for as part of the development. This does however, lead to the question as to the quantum of development necessary to deliver the rail interchange and A47 link road. These represent high value investments, along with the other highway improvements noted thus there must be a minimum quantum of floor area necessary in order to allow the development to be delivered. It is suspected that this may have driven the layout design and the numerous issues/concerns that are considered to occur as a result. These are set out below in turn, summarising in part many of the concerns already noted:

- The potential for the rail interchange to cease functioning during flood events due to it being located partially within the flood plain. Ideally it should be protected to ensure that the employment site can be operated without risk; if this is not achievable then the site should not be considered appropriate for the development at all, as it is being promoted solely on the basis of the need for employment units linked to a rail interchange. It is also questionable whether more of the site floods than that indicated on the flood risk maps; this situation needs to be verified in order to allow development of this land. It is noted that the other sites considered for this facility were all rejected on flood risk grounds.

- The potential under provision of surface water storage. If this cannot be shown to be appropriately modelled, then the risk to the surrounding area would be significant and potentially catastrophic. Less development would rebalance this issue, and the potential to include more surface water storage would offer a more manageable solution as well as adding to ecological benefits and the provision of incidental green spaces for use by future employees on the site.

- The impact upon ecology/biodiversity, given the massive reduction of habitats overall and the displacement of a variety of protected and endangered species. The provision of additional green space within the site or a more sensitive development to allow greater retention of existing habitats of note would start to readdress this issue; it would reduce the quantum of development though unless additional land can be incorporated into the scheme to offset the identified harms.

- The concern over proximity to Elmsthorpe and existing residents. They represent the closest noise-sensitive receptors and are around 300 metres from the key operations in respect of train movements and (un)loading activity on a site intended to be operational 24/7. In a rural location this will have a significant impact both visually and from a noise perspective upon this settlement and even more so the outlying dwellings to the south of Elmsthorpe. The scale of development has forced the proximity to these dwellings to be minimised, with only limited green landscaping. Less development would again offer the ability to provide an enhanced relationship towards the existing dwellings.

- The internal design of the scheme appears overly complicated in order to maximise unit floor space. The arrangement for units without a direct rail link requires the transfer of their goods onto a vehicle that needs to travel under the new A47 link road and then back across this highway at the new roundabout into the industrial estate. Keeping all such movements off the main public highway must be a better solution, but one which cannot seemingly be accommodated at present due to the alignment required for the A47 link road, unless the floor area of the employment units is reduced. In respect of protecting highway safety for users of the A47, this alteration has to be made to the scheme layout.

8.2 The site as a whole, assuming the principle of development and the need are not questioned, raises concerns over the appropriateness of the development in terms of its scale and the resultant impacts generated on highways, drainage, landscape and ecology grounds. Close consideration of the quantum of development proposed in respect of viability should be undertaken to ensure that the surrounding communities are not unduly harmed by a development being enlarged in scale simply to generate additional profit.

Yours faithfully

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