



## Meeting note

### File reference

**Status****Final**

Revised 4 March 2013

**Author**

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**Date**

14<sup>th</sup> October 2015

**Meeting with**

Ashfield Land

**Venue**

Temple Quay House

**Attendees**

The Planning Inspectorate:

Susannah Guest (Infrastructure Planning Lead), Richard Price (Case Manager), Mel Bischer (EIA Team), Frances Russell (EIA Manager), Rachel Gaffney (Assistant Case Officer)

The Developer:

Ashfield Land – James Digby, Claire Cope

Turley – Danny James

Bond Dickinson LLP – Victoria Redman

Intermodality – Nick Gallop

**Meeting**

Initial Project Meeting

**objectives****Circulation**

All attendees

### Summary of key points discussed and advice given:

The Planning Inspectorate advised on its openness policy, explaining that any advice given would be recorded and placed on the National Infrastructure website under section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which applicants (or others) could rely.

Introductions were made by everyone present, and individual roles were explained.

A presentation had been prepared to give background to the scheme and details of the proposal. Discussion and questions arose from the presentation.

The proposal is for a new strategic rail freight interchange in Northamptonshire. The proposed location is at the junction of the Northampton Loop Line and the West Coast Main Line. The Developer explained that the location plays to the strengths of the current rail network and the nearby strategic road network. The Developer highlighted the intention that this facility would be a potential UK hub for global distribution centres.

The site would contain a strategic rail freight interchange as well as substantial distribution floorspace and a train maintenance depot as a subsidiary activity. The Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project would also likely include offsite highway improvements through a grade separated junction to the A43 and works to the M1. The Developer indicated that the project may include track elements (lay-bys) that would provide additional benefits to the network and that discussions were underway about any potential connection agreements. The Developer explained that the rail freight interchange was being designed with capacity for 4 trains per day initially, increasing to potentially 10/12 trains within 10 years of operation.

The Developer confirmed the involvement of Network Rail in the process to date and that work had reached GRIP Stage 2 with the expectation of reaching GRIP Stage 3 by submission.

The Developer provided a brief overview of land ownership in the area and noted in particular those areas over which the Developer had rights.

The Developer noted that the Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal (DIRFT) was located 20 miles north of this proposal on the Northampton Loop Line. The Developer confirmed that the site had not been subject to previous applications for use as a rail freight interchange. It was noted, however that there had been Town and Country Planning Act (1990) (TCPA) applications in the vicinity of the site.

The main highways which are in close proximity to this site include the M1 and the A43. Junction 15A of the M1, is the closest motorway junction to the scheme, however the Developer indicated that Highways England (HE) have not suggested upgrading this particular junction as part of their Road Investment Strategy. The next junction along the A43 to the South of this proposal is the Towcester junction. There are a series of further junctions along the A43 all in relatively close proximity to the site. It was noted that in terms of highways, the Old Northampton Road will continue to run north to south through the scheme.

The Developer indicated that South Northamptonshire and Northampton Borough Council would be the relevant local authorities and that there were 16 relevant Parish Councils. The Developer was currently pursuing a programme of discussions with key parties to provide details of the scheme and was working through a local liaison group. It was noted that the Parish Councils of Blisworth (to the south of the scheme) and Milton Malsor (to the north of the scheme) would be the closest in proximity to the proposed development site. The Developer provided a broad overview of their current consultation strategy. It was noted that the current intention was for a split consultation zone; inner consultation and an outer consultation. A single stage consultation has been planned; however a second stage could occur if it is required.

The proposed timetable for the scheme was discussed. The Developer indicated that Scoping was anticipated to take place in November 2015, followed by a formal single stage consultation in April 2016 with the anticipated application submission date in Q3/4 2016. Construction was anticipated to commence in 2019 with a build period of 2 years. Eventually operation of the site was anticipated for 2021/22.

A programme of future meetings was discussed and provisional agreement was reached for a project update meeting in January 2016 which could note any matters arising from a Scoping Opinion and discuss the future consultation activity.

**Specific decisions / follow up required?**

Query in respect of the application of the Freedom of Information Act in respect of material held by the Planning Inspectorate at the Pre-Application stage. The Planning Inspectorate will issue s51 advice on this point.

The Planning Inspectorate would request key information about the project to enable a National Infrastructure Project Webpage to be created for the project to coincide with a request for a Scoping Opinion.

The Developer to provide the Planning Inspectorate with an update on likely timing of any Scoping Request and provide the information as requested in Advice Note 7. The Planning Inspectorate requested that consideration be given to the timing of the submission of a Scoping Request as if this was too close to Christmas then consultees might not have a clear 28 days in which to submit their responses to the Inspectorate.

The Planning Inspectorate will provide s51 advice on the following query:  
Certain highway improvements which may form part of the project could be classed as NSIP in their own right and this may require screening of the highway improvements in accordance with Section 22(5)(c) of the Planning Act 2008 to establish whether they will give rise to any likely significant effects. Have PINS had any previous experience of screening highway improvements under this section and what is the process for this.