

Dear Mr Singleton,

Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 (as amended) – Rule 17

Application by Four Ashes Limited for an Order Granting Development Consent for the West Midlands Interchange

Request for Further Information

I refer to your letter and enclosure of 30 July 2019, inviting additional information from Interested Parties on the issues identified. The comments below are in addition to and do not replace my original representations sent to you on behalf of my constituents in South Staffordshire, received by you on 29 October 2018 and 4 April 2019. As requested, my response relates to the Questions.

3.1.1 Schedule 2-Part 2: Rail Requirements The Flexibility provided for in the draft Requirements

I endorse the concerns raised by my constituents more recently at the Hearings, and detailed in your letter and enclosures of 30 July, on the uncertainty on the timing of the provision of the rail freight terminal, but also as to whether it would be provided at all. This is in addition to the potential effects on the highway network and in particular, the A5 and A449, if the rail terminal were not delivered.

On page 5/6(v), the ExA has highlighted that:-

“in a ‘worst case scenario’ the draft Requirements could potentially lead to the LPA being asked to give approval to WMI being completed and/or operated as a large warehousing development with no rail connection, as feared by many IPs in their evidence to the examination.”

Clearly this is of great concern to those who have objected to the WMI proposals.

3.2 Air Quality Assessment p9-11

Reference is made to Air Quality Management Areas in Walsall and Wolverhampton Council areas. It is my understanding that Air Quality Management Areas, also exist on the A5, both within South Staffordshire Council and Cannock Chase Council, up to the Walsall Council boundary. No reference has been made to these Staffordshire Air Quality Management Areas. As the A5 road is a key corridor for HGV traffic, particularly via the A5/M6T/A34/A460 Churchbridge junction, part of which lies within my constituency, there is a case for a comprehensive assessment of air quality on the A5 corridor. The proposed development could lead to a substantial increase in HGV traffic. I understand that only 40% of containers would be moved to/from the site by rail, with the remaining 60% being solely by road, thereby constituting additional HGV traffic that could have an adverse impact on air quality on the A5 and the A449, in addition to the legitimate concerns on additional vehicle movements.

I also wish to highlight the comments in Highways England's, South Midlands Route Strategy, March 2017, which are directly relevant to the WMI proposal, traffic growth and AQMAs (p21,link below):-

- *“Congestion at the A5 Churchbridge junction may affect growth sites in Cannock included in the local plans.*
- *Safety issues at Churchbridge and the Wall and Weeford interchanges could be exacerbated by future traffic growth.*
- *AQMAs are located at several locations along the route, especially the urban areas of Walsall and Cannock. Increasing congestion may worsen the situation for air quality and noise issues.*
- *Proposed SRFI at Four Ashes, west of the M6 may increase traffic levels on the A5 at Churchbridge.”*

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/600333/South_Midlands_Final.pdf

3.3.4 I note that Stop WMI Group made reference to alternatives sites. In June, I attended a meeting of the Chase Line Stakeholder Group, in which reference was made to the Pentaver, Mid Cannock road/rail freight interchange proposal. While this is not of a scale to be a SRFI, it would provide an alternative road/rail interchange facility that to serve the same area, that already has planning permission and which not lead to the proposed massive and inappropriate development in the Green Belt at Four Ashes.

The Mid Cannock site is located at a more strategic location of the Churchbridge M6T/A5/A34/A460 interchange and would be able to handle up to 6 container trains a day.