

THE RT. HON. GAVIN WILLIAMSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

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5th February, 2020

Planning Act 2008 and The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010

Application by Four Ashes Limited ("the Applicant") for an Order granting Development Consent to construct a new Strategic Rail Freight Interchange near to Junction 12 of the M6 motorway in South Staffordshire ("the Proposed Development").

Thank you for your letter dated 24 January 2020, inviting comments from Interested Parties on the Applicant's letter dated 13 December 2019, to the Secretary of State for Transport.

I note that the Applicant stresses the similarity between the West Midlands Interchange (WMI) proposals, with the Northampton Gateway Rail Freight Interchange proposal, the latter having being approved by the Secretary of State in his letter of 9 October 2019.

I have to say that I do not accept such comparisons are relevant as it is normal practice for planning applications to be assessed individually on their own merits. The Northampton GRF decision should no therefore set any precedent for the determination of the WMI proposal. This is particularly so as there are matters the Applicant both agrees and disagrees with in the NGExA decision letter.

I also note that the Applicant seeks to highlight the use of the words "should" or "must" as having different meanings with respect to the interpretation of the NPSNN.

I have to say I do not recognise such a distinction, which appears to be semantics.

Thank you for inviting me to make any additional comments on the proposal. I look forward to seeing the Secretary of State's decision on the application by 27 February 2020. These comments are made in addition to and do not supersede my previous submissions on 29 October 2018, 4 April 2019 and 8 August 2019.

Rt. Hon. Gavin Williamson CBE MP

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE