



CONSULTATION STRATEGY

NORTHAMPTON GATEWAY: STRATEGIC RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE

**On behalf of
Roxhill Developments Ltd**

November 2016



1. INTRODUCTION

This Consultation Strategy sets out the proposed approach to community consultation for the proposed 'Northampton Gateway' Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) being brought forward by Roxhill ('the applicant').

The strategy involves:

- an extensive, but non-statutory, consultation to be carried out commencing in December 2016; and
- the statutory consultation, currently anticipated to be carried out in Spring 2017.

This is in addition to the informal consultation with stakeholders on an individual basis being carried out for scheme development and assessment purposes.

This draft explains the consultation approach for discussion with the local authorities. In due course it will be replaced by a formal Statement of Community Consultation (SOCC) required by section 47 of the Planning Act 2008, which will be discussed with the host local authorities (South Northamptonshire, and Northampton Borough) ahead of the statutory consultation. The proposed development will span the administrative boundaries of these authorities.

As described below, the applicant has identified a core area for community consultation which forms part of this Statement, and is shared for comment and agreement with the host Local Authorities. In line with the legal requirements, this area includes the communities '*in the vicinity of*' the proposed development site and is intended to be used for the non-statutory and statutory consultation.

In keeping with the relevant guidance, the proposed approach to community consultation seeks to satisfy the requirement to ensure information and opportunity to comment is provided to those most affected, while also being reasonable and proportionate.

The Proposed Development and Site

The development proposed consists of:

- An intermodal freight terminal including container storage and HGV parking, with new rail sidings within the site to serve individual warehouses;
- Capability to provide a 'rapid rail freight' facility as part of the intermodal freight terminal;
- Up to 468,000 sq m (approximately 5 million sq ft) (gross internal area) of warehousing and ancillary buildings, with up to 155,000 sq m of additional floorspace provided in the form of mezzanine floorspace;
- new road infrastructure and works to the existing road network, including provision of a new access and associated works to the A508, a new bypass to the village of Roade, and substantial improvements to Junction 15 of the M1;
- Strategic landscaping and tree planting, including diverted public rights of way;
- Earthworks and demolition of existing structures on-site.

The development will include structural earthworks to create development plots and will include significant landscaped bunding to substantially screen the site from outside view. The site will contain landscaped areas and open space, including alterations to existing public rights of way and the creation of new publicly accessible routes.

The land proposed to accommodate the SRFI (referred to as ‘the main site’) is located to the west of the M1 Junction 15 and east of the Northampton Loop railway line. The A508 road runs along the site’s eastern boundary.

The closest settlements and communities are Milton Malsor to the west of the railway line, Blisworth to the south of the West Coast Main Line railway line, and Roade to the south along the A508. The communities of Collingtree and Grange Park are located to the north and east of the M1, and form part of the urban area of Northampton.

The proposed development also includes land for a new bypass to the village of Roade. Options for the precise alignment of this Bypass are being considered and assessed, and as referred to below, will form part of the initial community consultation with views sought about the most suitable route. This part of the development site is referred to as ‘the Bypass site’.

The Planning Process

As a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008, the Northampton Gateway proposals are to be subject of an application for Development Consent Order to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). The Planning Act 2008 establishes the legal framework for the preparation of, and then the determination of NSIP proposals and applications. A final decision whether to grant development consent will be made by the Secretary of State.

Further information about the planning process is available on the Planning Inspectorate website: <http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk/>

Following receipt of the application for development consent the Planning Inspectorate will carry out an “examination” of the proposals. In doing so it will consider all feedback received during the consultation exercise described below.

As part of the new process for determining applications for development consent for NSIPs, the Government has prepared ‘National Policy Statements’ on a range of infrastructure development, including various types of Energy infrastructure, Transport, Waste, and Water. In December 2014 the Government published a ‘National Policy Statement for National Networks’ which includes specific policy guidance on Strategic Rail Freight Interchange developments. This followed, and is consistent with, previous policy on Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges published in November 2011. The National Policy Statement, the earlier Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges guidance document, and more information can be found on the Department for Transport’s website.

These documents are also available on the project website: www.northampton-gateway.co.uk.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The development is considered to be Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development as defined in The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2009 (as amended), and accordingly an Environmental Impact Assessment is required.

That work, presented in an Environmental Statement (ES), will be submitted as part of the application. As progress continues in preparing the Assessment, Preliminary Environmental Information in the form of draft chapters of the Environmental Statement will be available to view for comment on the project website.

The EIA process focuses not just on any likely impacts but importantly on the opportunities for mitigation or other actions to reduce and minimise those impacts when the project is delivered.

2. CONSULTATION

Non-statutory consultation (late 2016 and early 2017)

Informal consultation and engagement has already begun, and is now gaining momentum.

Discussions and dialogue about distribution based development in this general location began in 2014 when a planning application was submitted (by the applicant) for a smaller-scale of distribution development on a similar site required to meet the needs of a major local employer. Although the earlier development proposals were different, there are numerous similarities, and the process involved the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment as well as extensive local consultation and engagement. That included public consultation and pre-application advice with the Local Authority (South Northamptonshire), as well as pre-application public consultation exhibitions held close to the site. Separate dialogue was also held with individual Parish Councils in advance of, and following, submission of the planning application, as well as contact with local Ward members.

That Planning Application was subsequently withdrawn following a change in the requirements and strategy of the intended occupier, but the process ensured that the applicant has both a detailed understanding of the characteristics and environmental quality of the main site and its immediate environs, as well as a good understanding of local community priorities and concerns.

Following the decision to bring forward an SRFI on this site, informal dialogue and engagement has already begun. This has been focused on informal contact with Parish Councils surrounding the site to ensure they are aware of the emerging proposals. In response one Parish Council (Milton Malsor) requested a briefing about the emerging proposals, and a representative of the applicant met with the Council. Briefings were also provided to officers and Members of South Northamptonshire District Council. In addition, contact with a local community action group also resulted in a briefing being provided by representatives of the applicant. This type of informal and non-statutory consultation will continue over the coming months alongside the non-statutory and statutory phases of community consultation.

Section 47 of the Planning Act 2008 requires the consultation of people living in the vicinity of the land where the proposed development will be located. The proposed approach to community consultation seeks to satisfy the requirement to ensure information and opportunity to comment is provided to those most likely to be affected by the proposed development. The applicant intends to take this approach during both the initial non-statutory and later statutory consultation phases.

A principal purpose of the various forms of consultation as set out in this Strategy is to gain a further understanding of specific issues and concerns held by the communities close to the land where the proposed development is situated, with a view to addressing and ameliorating these wherever possible.

The proposed consultation includes ensuring that Parish Councils are used as a key point of contact to ensure wider awareness in the local communities in addition to measures and activity to engage directly with local people and communities. As part of the approach, local elected members and parish councillors will form a key part of our ongoing consultation, as described below.

The focus for consultation material and publicity is proposed in a consultation area comprising of the following villages and communities:

- Milton Malsor
- Blisworth
- Roade
- Collingtree
- Courteenhall
- Grange Park
- Quinton
- Gayton
- Rothersthorpe

A map of this area is included as Appendix 1 and feedback from the host local authorities would be welcome.

Methods of Consultation

Community consultation will consist of the following complimentary elements:

A project website

A project website is being finalised which will be 'live' during November 2016 and which will be kept up to date with information about the proposals in general, and about the consultation processes. All material used as part of the consultation process will be also be available via the website. People and consultees will also be able to leave comments or ask questions using the website and by email.

The website address is: www.northampton-gateway.co.uk

Awareness raising leaflet

In advance of the non-statutory consultation, commencing in December 2016, a leaflet will be delivered to every residential and business address in the communities and villages listed above. This leaflet will provide a summary of the development proposals, give details of the forthcoming exhibition and consultation events, and include the website address. A map of this area is included as Appendix 1.

Adverts or notices will also be placed in the local press to help raise awareness of the first set of public exhibitions.

Public exhibitions

Public exhibitions are being held as part of the initial non-statutory stage of consultation, with three exhibitions arranged for December 2016. These will provide an opportunity for people to see details of the emerging proposals and provide comments and feedback.

- The exhibitions will display maps and other information about the scheme, including issues where options exist and a steer from local people is directly sought (e.g. alignment of the Roade Bypass);

- Preliminary environmental information will be available to aid the consultation process, made available via the project website, and summarised at the exhibition;
- Members of the project team will be present at all exhibitions to answer questions, discuss issues and record or note comments on the scheme;
- People will be able to leave written comments and suggestions at the exhibitions, or comments afterwards via letter or the website/email.

The initial public consultation exhibitions will be held at the Hilton Hotel, Collingtree as follows:

- **Monday 12th December 1.30pm – 7.30pm;**
- **Tuesday 13th December 1.30pm – 7.30pm;**
- **Wednesday 14th December 1.30pm – 7.30pm.**

As referred to below, a second phase of consultation events will also be held as part of the statutory consultation process. The number and location of those exhibitions has not yet been decided, and is an issue on which input from the local authorities would be welcome. This phase of the consultation will be more fully described in the formal Statement of Community Consultation to be produced in advance of the statutory consultation, as outlined below.

Other meetings

As and where appropriate opportunities arise the applicant will to attend local meetings to discuss the proposals, such as those held by local authorities or Parish Councils. This will represent a continuation of the work activity already underway.

Statutory Consultation (Spring 2017)

Further details of the strategy and timetable for the statutory stage of consultation will be prepared and shared for agreement with the local authorities in due course. A Statement of Community Consultation will be discussed with the host local authorities in advance of the start of the statutory consultation next year.

At this stage we expect the statutory phase of consultation to include the following actions:

- **Issue a summary document to all households and businesses** within the consultation area described above containing key information to summarise the proposed development and providing information on how individuals can communicate and make representations;
- **Advertise the second set of public consultation exhibitions** via leaflets and advertisements or notices in the main local newspapers (see below);
- **Supply locations including the local authority offices (Northampton and Towcester), as well as local libraries** across the consultation area with copies of key consultation documents available for public consideration;

- **Ensure all relevant local authorities surrounding the site, including the County Council and neighbouring local authorities in the County Council areas of Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, receive all of the relevant project information.** This will assist the Councils in ensuring elected Members and Council Officers are aware of and able to comment on the proposals, but are also able to help communities and the public understand the proposals should they approach the local authorities for assistance.
- We will **write to all District and Parish Councillors** representing communities within the identified consultation area, making them aware of how, where, and when they and their constituents can access the project information, and comment upon it.
- **Publicise** our intention to submit an application for this Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act 2008, including through notices in newspapers.

Notice of the final SoCC in advance of the statutory stage of consultation in 2017, and relevant advertisements or other notices required by the Planning Act 2008, will be advertised in the local press. The following local newspapers are proposed for these notices, selected in light of their main circulation areas (but confirmation from the host authorities that these are considered appropriate would be welcome):

- Northamptonshire Telegraph
- Northampton Chronicle & Echo

This approach will ensure notices appear in prevalent local newspaper in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development, but also in other communities well beyond that immediate area. This is likely to also include the notice being included online where the newspaper's website allows for that.

In addition, as referred to above, all consultation information, including details of exhibitions will be available to the public on the project website. This website will be kept live and refreshed, with new information or documentation regularly added to it.

In keeping with the legislation, formal public consultation to be held in 2017 will be held over a minimum of a 28 day period within which responses to the consultation will be encouraged.

As mentioned above, a summary of the proposed development will be distributed to all households and businesses within the consultation area, this will set out the consultation process and subsequent deadline for representations to be made.

Respondee will be able to submit representations and comments via the following methods (during both non-statutory and statutory stages);

- By hand (or post – see below) via a printed comments form available at the public exhibitions;
- Online via the comments form on the project website: www.northampton-gateway.co.uk
- By email to contact-us@northampton-gateway.co.uk
- By telephone using the project phone line: **01788 538440**;
- By post to: Northampton Gateway
c/o Unit 7 Wheatcroft Business Park
Edwalton
Nottingham

NG12 4DG

(A PO Box will be available in advance of the statutory consultation stage.)

- In person at the public exhibitions described above.

Taking account of responses to the consultation and publicity

As referred above, dialogue and consultation with a wide range of interested parties and stakeholders has begun and will now continue through the non-statutory and statutory phases of consultation.

This consultation has already directly informed some key aspects of the emerging design and composition of the scheme which has evolved and developed in response to the views and ideas of local organisations and groups.

Representations received during both the non-statutory and statutory consultation stages will be properly recorded and considered. Where appropriate the project team will respond directly to the points that people make, particularly where specific proposals or amendments are suggested. An explanation of how consultation input and representations received have shaped and influenced the proposed development will be provided to the Secretary of State in a '**Consultation Report**', which is required by the Planning Act 2008 to accompany the application for a Development Consent Order.

APPENDIX 1 – MAP OF PROPOSED CONSULTATION AREA

