

PURPOSE OF THIS NEWSLETTER

This Newsletter seeks to update the community on the work that has been being undertaken to inform the Northampton Gateway proposal, including some of the changes that have been made. It also sets out the likely programme for future work, consultation and submission of the application.

BACKGROUND

Roxhill is proposing a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) on land to the west of the M1 Junction 15. The proposed SRFI is known as 'Northampton Gateway'. An SRFI is a large multi-purpose freight interchange and distribution centre linked into both the rail and trunk road systems.

NORTHAMPTON GATEWAY WOULD INCLUDE:

- A rail freight terminal (and express freight facility) with the capacity to accommodate up to 16 trains per day in the longer-term
- In excess of 5m sq. ft. of rail-served warehousing with mezzanine floorspace and ancillary office accommodation
- Substantial improvements to Junction 15 of the M1 motorway to improve capacity and reduce congestion
- Provision of a new Roade Bypass to alleviate local traffic constraints
- Significant earthworks, landscaping and tree planting to substantially screen the site from outside view

CONSULTATION SO FAR

Roxhill held an initial consultation in November and December of 2016 with a series of public meetings hosted by local Parish Councils, and a 3 day public exhibition. This consultation was held to make people aware of the proposals at an early stage, to gain feedback on the proposals and to inform people of the likely application process.

The exhibitions were attended by around 300 people and around 70 local individuals, bodies or groups, have provided written comments. The feedback we have received has helped to inform our ongoing work and evolution of the proposals.

Engagement with the local communities has taken place through a number of public meetings held or hosted by Parish Councils late in 2016 and during 2017 in Milton Malsor, Blisworth, Collingtree, and Roade. These have provided opportunities to hear local views about the proposals and to explain and discuss the ongoing technical and assessment work.

In addition to engagement with the public and Parish Councils we have had meetings with officers at both South Northants District Council (SNDC) and Northampton Borough Council, as well as the County Council. We have given a briefing to Members at SNDC to explain the emerging proposals, and held a site visit meeting with Andrea Leadsom MP.

Our consultant team is also engaging with a wide range of consultees, including Network Rail, Highways England, the local Highways Authority (NCC), Natural England, and the Environment Agency.



SITE LOCATION

UPDATE ON WORK UNDERTAKEN TO DATE AND SCHEME EVOLUTION

Roxhill have progressed the technical, design and environmental assessment work necessary to inform the application for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange. The process of assessment and scheme design is an iterative one and assessment work will be ongoing for a number of months to come. The scheme could continue to evolve in response to this work (as well as to consultation), with the effects of the proposals assessed and measured to mitigate any detrimental effects.

HIGHWAYS

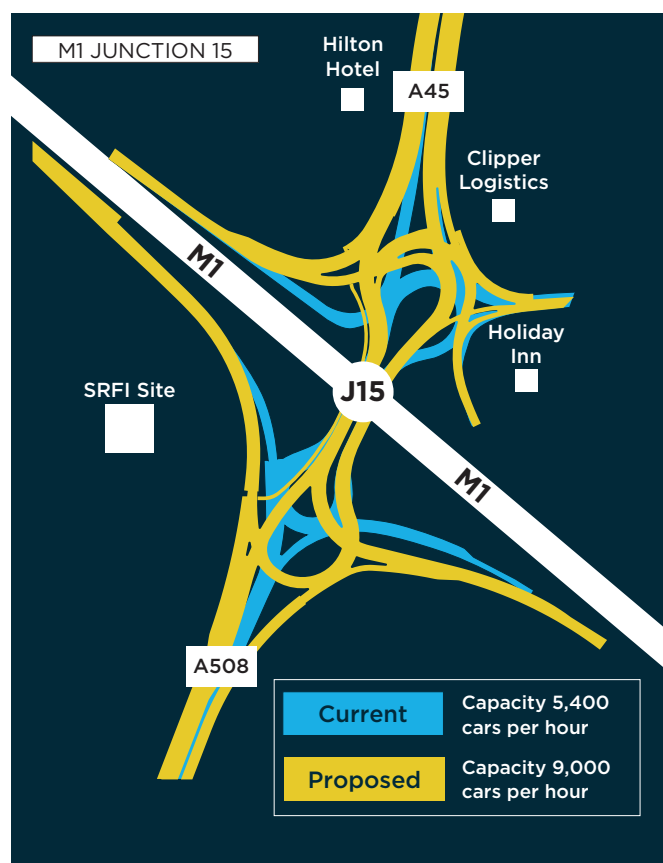
In order to undertake a detailed assessment of the effects of the scheme on the local and national road network it has been necessary to await an update to the Northamptonshire County Council's Strategic Transport Model. This has taken many months but has now been completed and this model is now being used to undertake an assessment of the likely traffic impacts of the proposal. This modelling will both test the current proposed mitigation measures (including the improvements to M1 Junction 15 and the Road Bypass) and also help inform the design of any further mitigation measures required to minimise any adverse effects.

For example as a result of initial outputs from the model we are currently looking at options to enhance capacity at M1 Junction 15a and measures to manage traffic through the villages. The scale and nature of these further mitigation works will be informed by the detailed transport modelling which is ongoing and will form part of the application.

The proposed Junction 15 improvement scheme would see a significant increase in capacity at the junction, with additional lanes provided to aid movements to and from the M1 slips and on the A45 approach, as well as additional lanes linking with the dualled stretch of the A508 south of Junction 15 as far as the proposed site access roundabout. The junction would also see additional signalisation. As indicated on the diagram, the proposed junction would deliver significantly more capacity than the existing Junction, helping improve conditions for existing road-users while also creating space for the additional traffic generated by the proposed development. More detailed drawings of the emerging access design are available on the project website.

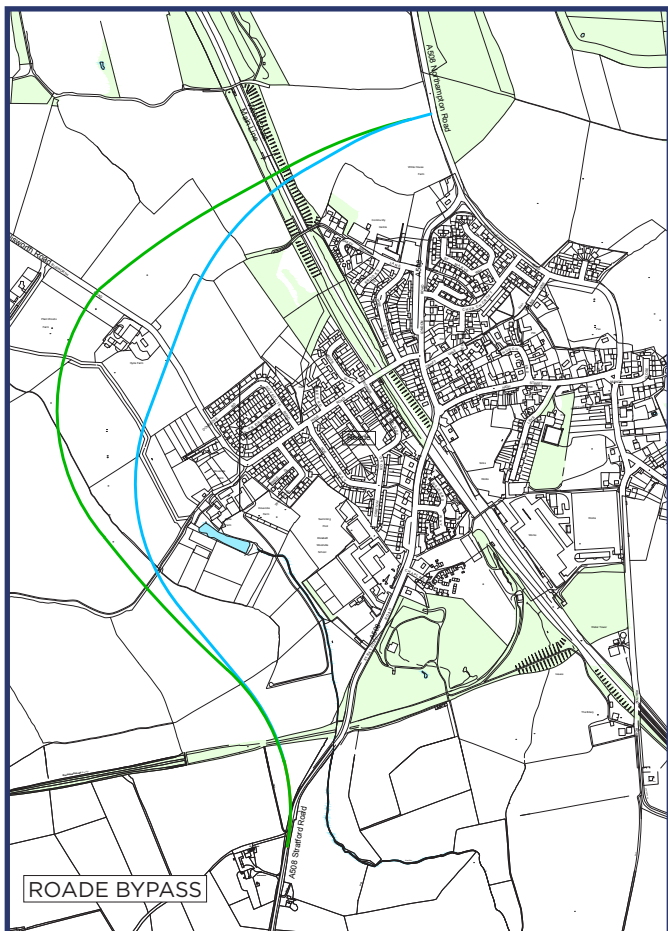
The issue of current and potential 'rat running' through local villages was a concern raised during consultation.

The modelling work being undertaken will help to understand the effects of the scheme and the highway improvements proposed, on these villages. Early results indicate that the improvements at J15 together with the creation of a Road bypass help to focus traffic on the strategic road network, minimising 'rat running'.



However, once we understand more fully the residual transport flows and movements predicted by the model we intend to propose appropriate measures where required to address any key impacts in the villages, and will discuss these with Parish Councils as well as with the Highways Authority.

All of the measures identified including those described above will be the subject of a formal consultation with the community at large - we expect this to take place in the Autumn.



ROUTE OPTIONS

Green route

This is not our preferred option as, on balance, it is considered to have a greater environmental impact

Blue Route

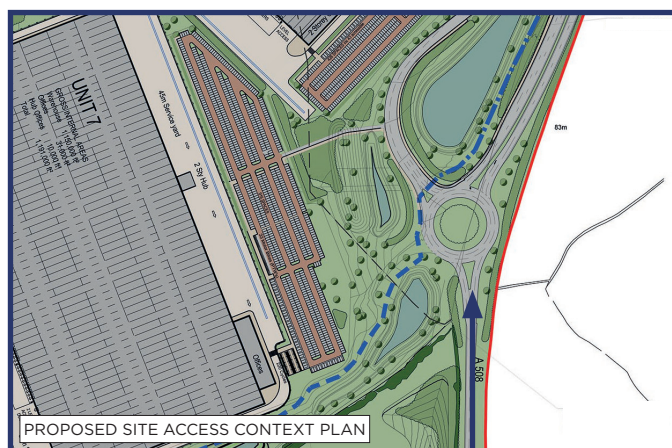
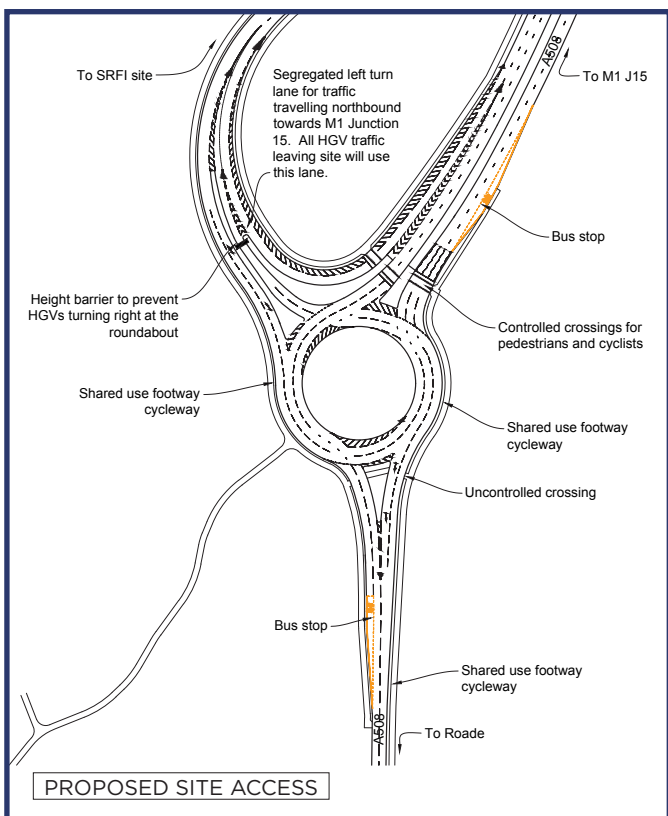
This is our preferred option, as, on balance, it is considered to have a lesser environmental impact

DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR BYPASS

- Single 7.3m Carriageway plus 1m Hardstrips
- Footway / Cycleway provision along the route
- 60mph Road / 100kph Design Speed
- Designed to the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges

One specific issue on which we sought local views was the alignment of the proposed Roade Bypass. Comments received through our initial consultation generated a relatively low number of specific responses to this issue, but indicated that on balance the inner of the two routes (the one closest to the village edge) was preferred. However, there were clearly quite mixed views and so we remain keen to receive comments from the residents of Roade in particular as to their views on whether the Bypass should be aligned on the inner or outer corridor. Comments on this can be submitted either via the project website and email address, or by post using the PO Box (Northampton Gateway SRFI, P O Box 10570, Nottingham, NG2 9RG).

An issue which has been raised locally is that of the potential for high volumes of HGVs heading south from the scheme on the A508 through Roade. In response to concerns raised we are exploring how to prevent (and enforce) HGVs from turning south out of the site onto the A508. Our ongoing work suggests this can be achieved through the physical design of the access with height restrictions which prevent HGVs from turning right out of the site, supported by cameras and number plate recognition with fines for any contravention.



RAIL CONNECTION AND CAPACITY

Roxhill is working with Network Rail to assess the suitability of the rail infrastructure proposed, including the connection to the Northampton loop line, together with an analysis of the capacity of the network to accommodate the proposals.

Roxhill expect the number of trains arriving and departing from the terminal to build up over time as the scheme is built out and as the level of freight moved by rail (as opposed to road) increases. When fully operational, Northampton Gateway could accommodate up to 16 freight trains per day. This level of demand is expected to take several years to build-up and would not occur until sometime after HS2 has opened and released additional capacity on the West Coast Main Line. In the early years following the opening of Northampton Gateway (if approved) rail freight volumes are typically expected to be only 3 – 4 trains per day.

Network Rail is undertaking a study of the freight capacity on the Northampton loop. This study together with work being undertaken by Roxhill's Rail consultants will help to identify the suitable freight train paths that can serve the development.

Roxhill are also working with Network Rail to undertake GRIP feasibility studies. GRIP is a standard rail industry process through which all new rail lines and rail connections must be assessed.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A wide range of surveys and assessments are ongoing on both the main SRFI site, and the Roade Bypass site. Details of the early work in preparing the Environmental Statement were provided in December 2016 on the project website (www.northampton-gateway.co.uk). The Environmental Statement will contain chapters on the following environmental topics:

- Socio-Economic impacts
- Landscape & Visual
- Ecology and Nature Conservation
- Geology, Soil & Groundwater
- Water Resources and Drainage
- Noise
- Air Quality
- Cultural Heritage
- Lighting
- Transportation
- Agricultural Land Quality
- Cumulative Effects

A draft of the Environmental Statement will be available when we hold our statutory consultation later this year (see final page of this newsletter for an update on the programme).

Survey and other work required to prepare the assessments is ongoing and at varying stages, with some

survey and other technical work due to continue over the summer.

In terms of an update on key ongoing work:

Ecology

Ecology surveys have been underway for some time and are complete on the main SRFI site, and now nearing completion on the Bypass corridor. These surveys have identified a fairly typical range of habitats for agricultural land, with the main species of interest limited in coverage to some hedgerows and ponds, as well as use by wintering birds.

Archaeological Ground Investigations

Geophysical (archaeological) and ground investigations are also being undertaken on both sites. These will help to provide data regarding the potential for archaeology within the proposed development area, and inform a programme of works to investigate and record any features of potential interest. The ground investigations will inform various technical aspects of the application, including the detailed approach to earthworks, construction, and drainage.

Noise and Air Quality

Detailed Noise and Air Quality impact assessments will be undertaken once the transport modelling has advanced further. However, the baseline monitoring is ongoing and on completion will have taken place for around 12 months to ensure we have an accurate picture of the baseline conditions, including in the Air Quality Management Areas nearby on the M1, and on the A45. Baseline monitoring data to date shows that some locations close to the site and close to the M1 and other roads experience relatively high levels of NO2 emissions, but also that these levels decline rapidly over relatively short distances from these major roads. Therefore the number of 'receptors' (i.e. homes) exposed regularly to high levels of air pollution is very low.

On-Site Drainage

Several local people were keen to raise questions about the local water-table, and whether the proposed emerging drainage strategy would be suitable and deliverable on the site. In particular, whether the use of drainage features such as new large ponds would be effective in successfully storing and controlling surface water run-off.

Following further environmental assessment work Roxhill are satisfied that the local water table is not an impediment to the development of the site. The work has also informed the detailed design (in terms of size and volume) of on-site drainage features.

This detailed work has informed an updated illustrative masterplan - see final page.

Landscaping and Screening

It is clear that many people are primarily concerned with whether they would be able to see or hear the proposed SRFI site and buildings. This is an issue we are very aware of, and our initial consultation included details of the considerable work undertaken to ensure that the site and buildings would be substantially screened from outside view. Using existing topography, together with significant earthworks on-site, we are confident that we can achieve this through substantial new landscaped bunds and tree planting which would surround the site along the western, northern and eastern boundaries in particular. Coupled with the buildings being effectively 'sunk' into the site – with new ground levels in places between 8-10 metres below the existing ground levels – this strategy would provide substantial and effective visual screening.

The proposed landscaping and earthworks strategy would also have benefits with regard to mitigating noise and lighting impacts which might otherwise impact on

receptors closest to the site. The effectiveness of the landscaping scheme on these potential types of impact will be assessed and described in the Environmental Statement.

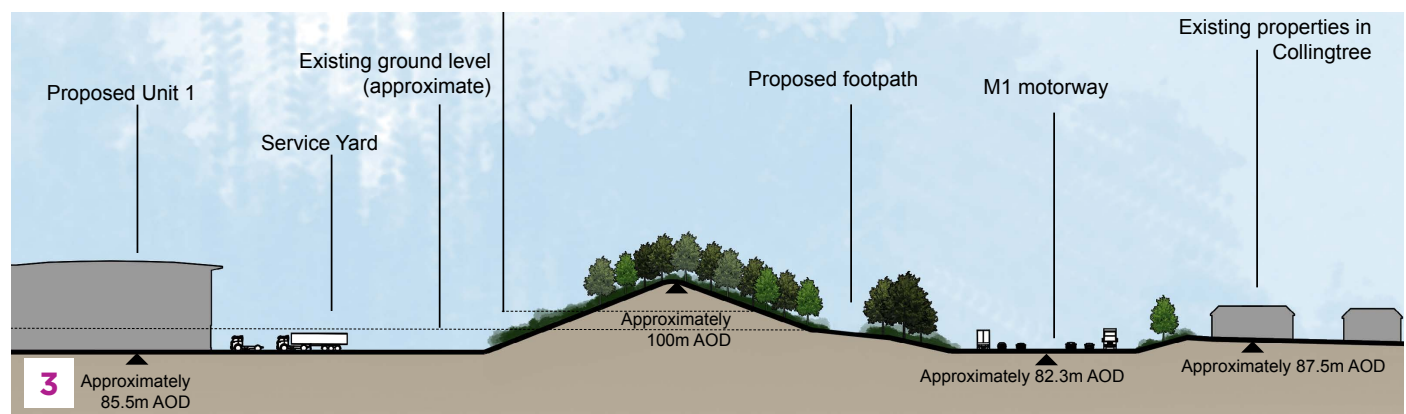
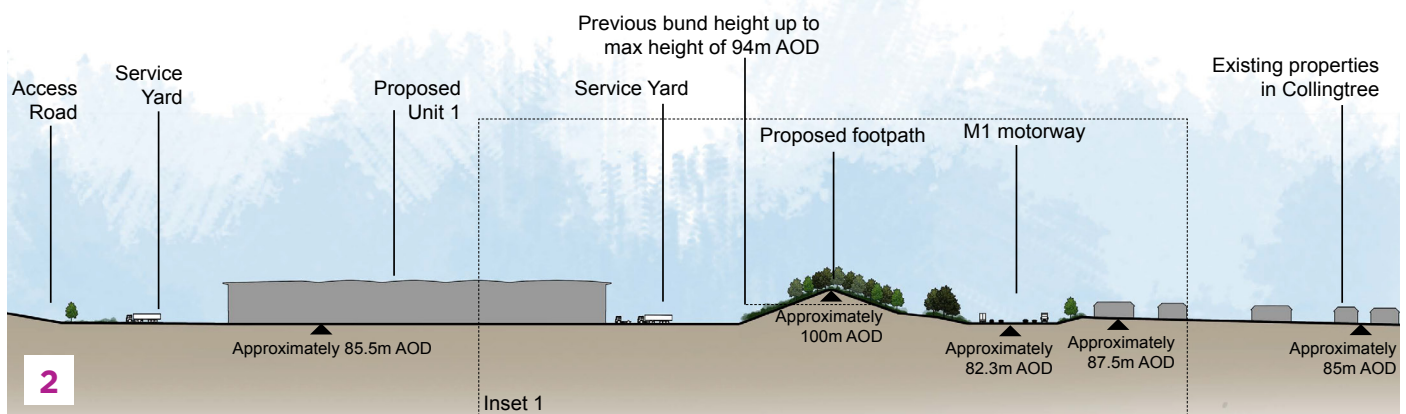
We welcomed the numerous positive comments received from local people about this strategy and about the likely mitigation it would provide to surrounding communities.

However, in light of discussion with some respondents we have revisited the strategy as it relates to Collingtree. Informed in part by further work regarding earthworks and the balance of 'cut and fill' required on-site, we believe we are able to increase the bunding by several metres opposite Collingtree. This positive change will further screen the site from view from the northern side of the M1.

In response to local concerns that there could be future plans for a potential expansion of this SRFI site to the west of the railway, Roxhill will transfer a 'control strip' of land along the western edge of the site to an agreed appropriate local public body (such as the Local Authority).

See cross sections below

1. Section location plan – this shows the alignment of the cross section shown at image 2.
2. Section 5-5A towards the East and Collingtree
3. Inset towards the East and Collingtree – this shows in further detail the area identified as 'Inset 1' on image 2.





Parameters have been identified for the development on which the environmental assessment is based. The parameters control the general layout of buildings, infrastructure and landscaping and impose limits on the scale of development, including the heights of buildings. The Illustrative Masterplan shows one way in which development could come forward in accordance with those parameters. The Parameters Plan is available on the project website.

APPLICATION PROGRAMME & FUTURE CONSULTATION

The results of the ongoing consultation process are feeding into key aspects of the scheme evolution and design. Further (statutory) public engagement and consultation is planned for later this year once we have progressed the work described above. Roxhill's team will continue to engage with key statutory and other consultees to discuss the proposals. Statements of Common Ground will be prepared and agreed with many consultees as we progress the application documents.

We expect to hold our statutory consultation sometime in the Autumn. A statutory consultation period of 28 days is required, but we expect to consult over a period of around 6 weeks.

The statutory consultation will see publication of a wide range of draft application material, including a draft of the Environmental Statement and other information to aid and inform consultation responses.

The project website will be updated as new information is available: (www.northampton-gateway.co.uk) The programme is subject to change if issues arise or key workstreams are delayed. However, at present the expectations are:

Summer 2017 – ongoing technical work and dialogue with key consultees; ongoing pre-application process with SNDC and Northampton Borough Council;

Autumn 2017 – statutory public consultation with communities in the vicinity of the site and other key parties and consultees. This will include a range of public exhibitions and opportunities to see and comment on the proposals;

End of 2017 / early 2018 – submission of the application for Development Consent to the Planning Inspectorate. Assuming the Planning Inspectorate accept the application, this would then begin a process of 15 months over which time the Inspectorate would examine and report on the application before determination by the Secretary of State for Transport.