



NORTHAMPTON
GATEWAY
STRATEGIC RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS (DECEMBER 2016)

DOCUMENT 6.5A

The Northampton Gateway Rail Freight Interchange Order 201X

Regulation No: 5 (2) (q)

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS | DECEMBER 2016

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STRATEGIC RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

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1. Introduction and purpose of this document
2. Summary of the Northampton Gateway proposals
3. Overview of the potential or likely impacts of Northampton Gateway
4. Consultation issues and process, consultation programme, and contacts

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1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT'

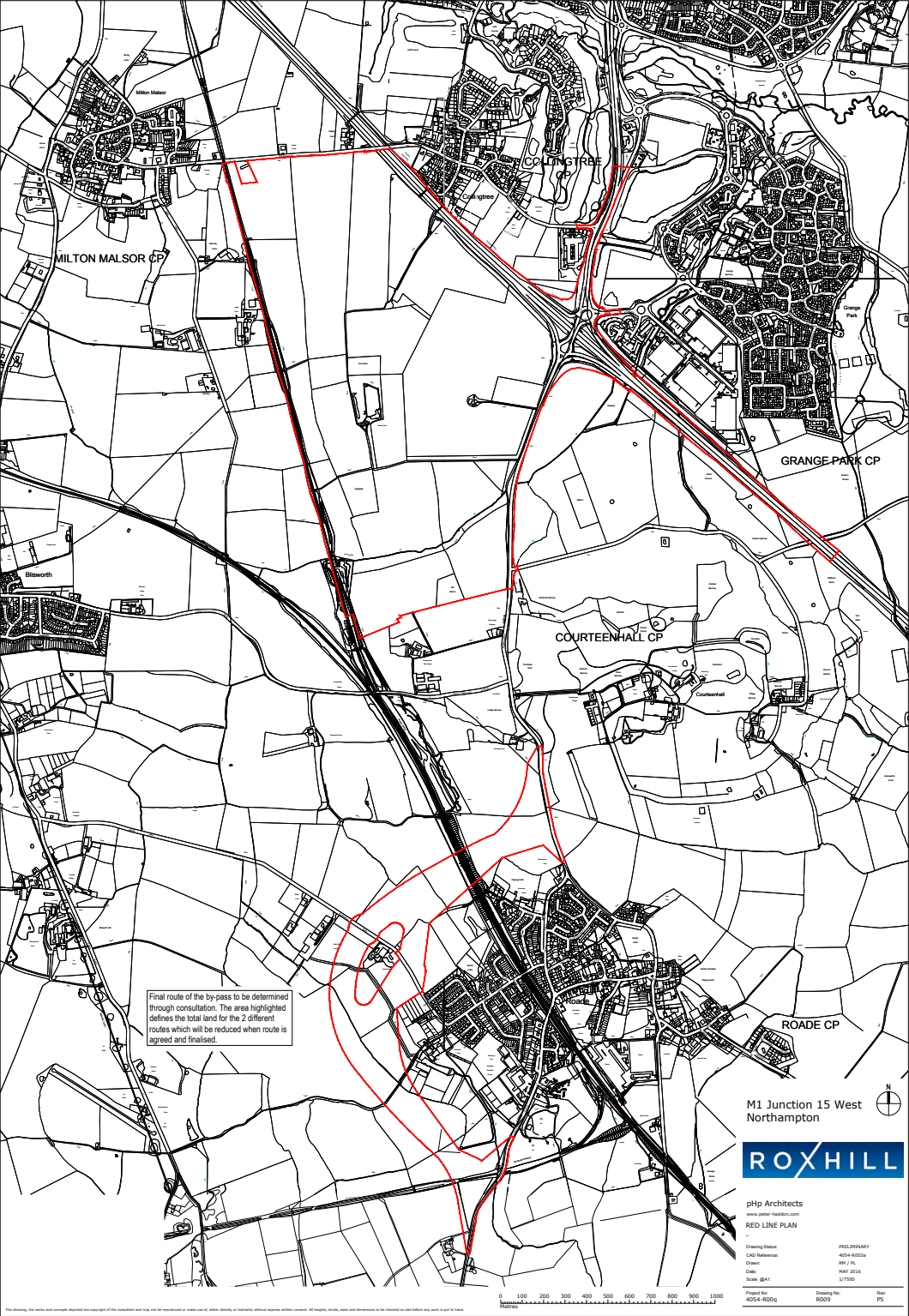
- 1.1 This document is intended to provide a short and straight-forward summary of the Northampton Gateway proposals. It has been prepared by the applicant, Roxhill (Junction 15) Ltd ('Roxhill'), and is intended to help local people and other consultees in reviewing and commenting on the emerging proposals.
- 1.2 This summary sets out details of the proposals, gives an overview of the national policy context, and also describes some of the likely or potential issues and impacts associated with the proposals. The intention is that reading this document will also provide a good overview of the main elements of, and programme for, the next stages of the process. It has been prepared as part of the material used in the initial (non-statutory) public consultation being held in December 2016/January 2017.
- 1.3 Northampton Gateway meets the definition and thresholds for a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), meaning Roxhill are required to apply for a development consent order to authorise the development rather than for planning permission. The application will be made to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), and ultimately determined by the Secretary of State for Transport.
- 1.4 As is made clear in the information being presented at the public consultation exhibitions, on the awareness raising leaflets distributed locally, and on the project website, much of the technical and environmental information from which this summary document is drawn remains 'work in progress'. The preparation of the Environmental Statement (ES) (which forms part of the overall Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)) is underway, and a 'Scoping Report', setting out the range and methodology of the work to be undertaken to prepare the ES, was submitted to PINS in mid-October. In response, PINS produced a scoping opinion in early December, following consultation on the Scoping Report. That process could have implications for some aspects of the proposed ES, and the work required to complete the ES. Therefore, at this relatively early stage in the process Roxhill has not yet undertaken or completed a number of the surveys and assessments required to prepare the Environmental Impact Assessment (ES). More information about the ES is provided in Section 3.
- 1.5 It is important to note that, following preparation and submission of a major planning application on a similar site in 2014, which also included the submission of an ES, the applicant already has a relatively good understanding of the site and the characteristics of the surrounding area. Although the Northampton Gateway proposals are larger and include a different range of activity on a larger site, the previous assessment of the likely effects of the earlier development proposals is also of some assistance in providing an early indication of the likely key issues and likely effects.

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LOCATION PLAN



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2. SUMMARY OF THE NORTHAMPTON GATEWAY PROPOSALS

Description of the proposed development

- 2.1. The proposed development which is the subject of the application for Development Consent comprises:
- 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 drainage attenuation features, and diverted public rights of way;
 - Earthworks and demolition of existing structures on-site.
- 2.2. Excluding the land required for the Roade Bypass (the extent and precise location of which is still to be determined) the total application area – or Order Limits – are approximately 247ha (610 acres) including the works associated with Junction 15 and the A45. The SRFI site itself covers approximately 185 hectares (457 acres approx.). This includes an area of land within the southern part of the site, south of the existing watercourse, which is intended to be retained for agricultural use by the existing landowner. A 'red line' location plan is included as Figure 1, and a Draft Illustrative Masterplan as Figure 2.
- 2.3. The SRFI site is located immediately to the west of Junction 15 of the M1, and to the east of the Northampton Loop railway line. The A508 road provides part of the site's eastern boundary. The M1 runs along the remainder of the site's eastern boundary, with the largely residential area of Collingtree (in Northampton Borough) immediately beyond the M1. Collingtree Road comprises the northern boundary of the SRFI site.
- 2.4. The SRFI site is currently agricultural land, well contained by the road and rail infrastructure referred to above. Beyond the site boundary and separated from the site by open land, are the South Northamptonshire villages of Milton Malsor to the west, Blisworth to the south-west, Roade to the south, and Courteenhall to the east. Grange Park is located to the east of the site, to the east of the M1 and Junction 15.

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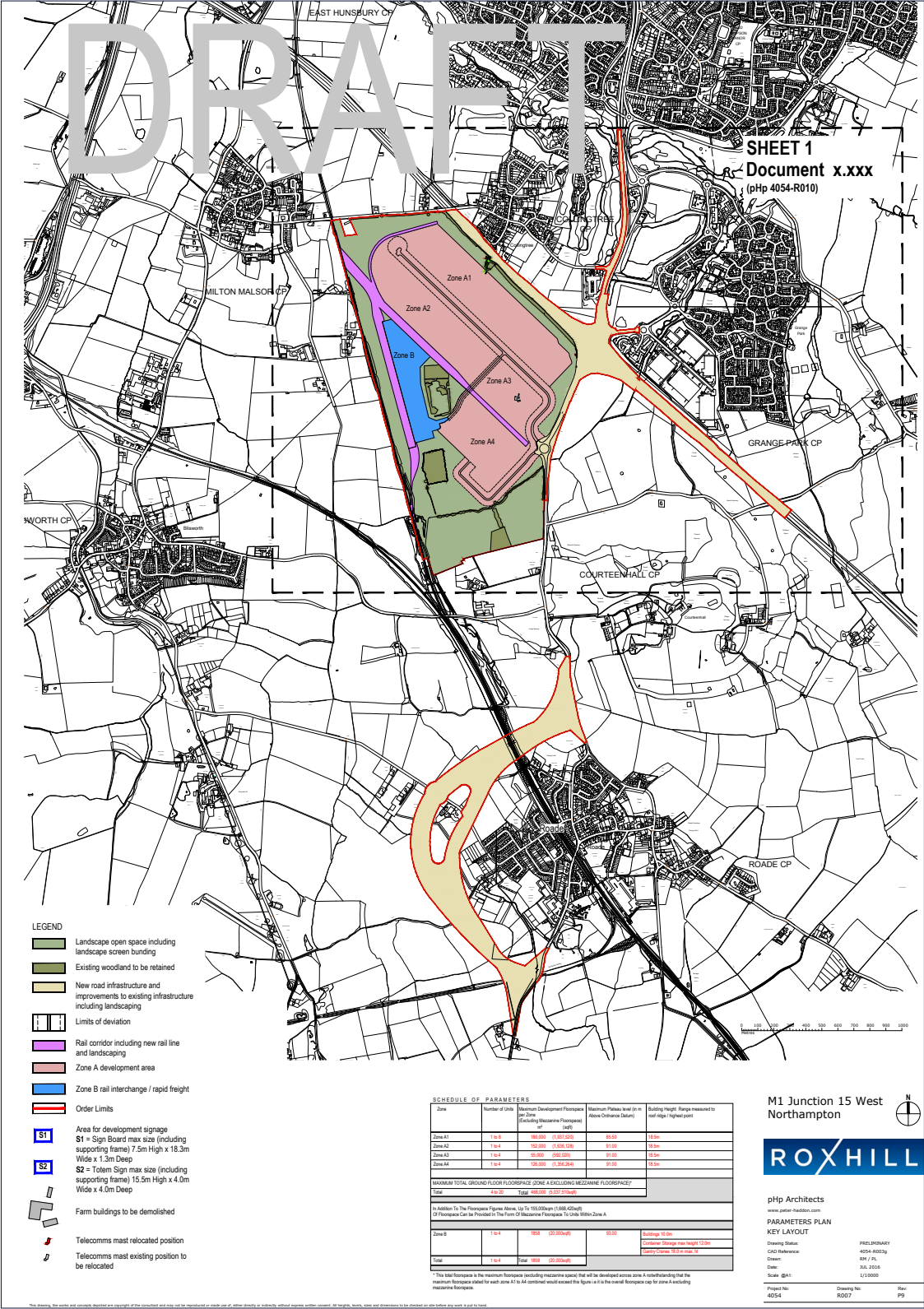
- 2.5. The precise alignment of the proposed Roade Bypass is not yet finalised, but two general corridors have been identified following initial environmental assessment and preliminary highways design work. The two potential alignments are both around the western side of Roade across mostly agricultural land, but also include crossing the West Coast Main Line railway.
- 2.6. The decision about the chosen route, and the nature of the junctions with existing roads will be informed in part by the results of public consultation and also by dialogue with other consultees.
- 2.7. Key 'parameters' regarding the maximum building heights and the maximum total number of buildings, as well as the 'zones' or corridors in which buildings and key infrastructure will be located will be fixed as part of the application process, and defined in the 'Parameters Plan'.
- 2.8. The Illustrative Masterplan is one potential form of development which would be in accordance with the proposed parameters. The currently proposed Parameters Plan is included as Figure 3. The Parameters are the subject of ongoing assessment and will be reviewed as part of that process.

Why is Northampton Gateway a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project?

- 2.9. Whether or not development is a "Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project" (NSIP) depends upon whether or not development comes within the description of NSIPS set out in Sections 14 to 34 of the Planning Act 2008 ("2008 Act").
- 2.10. It is apparent that the proposed development complies with the criteria for a Rail Freight Interchange under Section 26 of the Act and therefore a DCO will be required.
- 2.11. The elements of the proposed development which are not an integral part of the SRFI are all considered to be 'associated development'.
- 2.12. The key criteria which define this as an NSIP are:
- Site area (in excess of 60 ha)
 - Scale and nature of the uses proposed

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PARAMETERS PLAN



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What is a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange? Why do we need it?

- 2.13. The Northampton Gateway proposal is a 'Strategic Rail Freight Interchange', usually abbreviated to 'SRFI'. Alternatively, National Policy and legislation sometimes refers to them as Rail Freight Interchanges (RFI). In simple terms, these operate like ports, with goods arriving and transferred from train to lorry, or vice versa, as part of the supply chain and distribution of freight and goods around the UK. The activity related to the movement of goods is often referred to as 'distribution' or 'logistics', and is an important economic sector and employer in its own right.
- 2.14. The proposals are a response to an explicit recognition by Government of the need for more SRFIs to help deliver the economic and environmental benefits and outcomes from a continued shift from road to rail freight. Government policy is discussed in further detail below.
- 2.15. Some goods will come to an SRFI and be stored before being collected or sent somewhere else at a later date, while others will only be at the SRFI long enough to be moved from one vehicle to another before continuing their journey. Some goods might be processed or packaged at, or close to, an SRFI before being moved again. The freight and goods which will use Northampton Gateway will come from, or be sent to, destinations around the UK via the road and/or rail network, including via the UK's key sea ports, many of which are connected to the rail freight network.

Why at this site?

- 2.16. The site of the proposed Northampton Gateway is at a strategically important location with excellent access to the national road and rail networks, making it a sound and logical choice for an SRFI.
- 2.17. The site is directly adjacent to the main north-south motorway in England, and also close to the strategic east- west A14 route via the A45, as well as close to junctions with the M45 and M6 motorways. The site has very good rail connections to all the major container ports on the South Coast, East Coast and Thames Estuary, and is linked to the Northampton Loop Line which feeds into the West Coast Main Line which is the UK's main freight corridor (it handles more than 40% of all UK rail freight).
- 2.18. In addition to port related traffic, the site will also be well positioned to allow goods to be transferred by rail between this SRFI and other regional rail terminals elsewhere, and will form part of a 'national network' of SRFIs envisaged by national policy (see below).

- 2.19. In addition, the site is close to a number of urban areas, including not only Northampton, but it would also serve a core market including Milton Keynes, Towcester, and Wellingborough. These, and other surrounding towns and villages, in combination with commuters using the M1, would also provide a supply of labour to fill the jobs created.
- 2.20. In light of all of the above, this location is ideally suited to accommodate an SRFI. It is also aligned with national policy with regard to the locations for SRFIs as explained below..
- 2.21. The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for the South East Midlands (SEMLEP) recognises and promotes the strengths and opportunities of the area for logistics and distribution activity due to its accessibility to national road and rail networks, and to national markets. This sectoral strength is recognised through a number of the priorities in their Strategic Economic Plan, and the associated evidence base including the 'Logistics Report' of 2013.
- 2.22. Northamptonshire has historically embraced the 'growth' agenda, with the national 'Sustainable Communities Plan' encouraging significant infrastructure and housing growth in the 'Milton Keynes & South Midlands Growth Area' which included Northamptonshire. Northampton was a major focus for this growth as the main urban settlement in the County, and the approach explicitly recognised the need for new jobs alongside the new housing growth planned. The current Core Strategy is still ambitious, and plans for provision of 41,760 new homes across West Northamptonshire between 2011 and 2029, with 25,758 in Northampton Borough, with a jobs growth target (for monitoring purposes) of 28,500 in the period 2008-2029.

National Policy

- 2.23. The Government published policy guidance on SRFI in November 2011, and updated this with the National Policy Statement in December 2014. This is available via the Department for Transport's website, and a link is also provided in the project website (www.northampton-gateway.co.uk) – also see Section 4 of this document.
- 2.24. The National Policy Statement is clear that there is a need for a network of SRFIs, and forecasts are for significant growth in freight traffic, including a doubling in container traffic by 2030. There is a long lead-in to the delivery of SRFIs taking into account the planning process and construction process – to deliver the capacity needed by the forecasts new SRFIs need to be identified and brought forward without delay.
- 2.25. The National Policy Statement does not define the envisaged network of SRFIs in detail, with sites to be brought forward and delivered by the private sector in response to the priorities and objectives set by Government policy. Increasing the use of rail transport, as opposed to HGV road vehicles, is seen by Government as essential in terms of the benefits of reducing road congestion, but also in terms of improved environmental sustainability and increased energy efficiency.

- 2.26. The National Policy Statement (NPS) recognises the importance of SRFIs in terms of both economic development and addressing climate change. The Statement makes explicit references to their role in facilitating the movement of freight from road to rail, and in reducing freight mileage on both national and local road networks. This is seen as central to Government's vision for transport which is described as:

'Government's vision for transport is for a low carbon sustainable transport system that is an engine for economic growth, but is also safer and improves the quality of life in our communities.....The transfer of freight from road to rail has an important part to play in a low carbon economy and in helping to address climate change.' (*NPS 2014, paragraph 2.53*)

- 2.27. The NPS describes the aim of an SRFI as:
- '...to optimise the use of rail in the freight journey by maximising rail trunk haul and minimising some elements of the secondary distribution leg by road, through co-location of other distribution and freight activities. SRFIs are a key element in reducing the cost to users of moving freight by rail and are important in facilitating the transfer of freight from road to rail, thereby reducing the trip mileage of freight movements on both the national and local road networks.' (*NPS 2014, paragraph 2.44*)

- 2.28. The NPS describes the main drivers of demand and need for SRFIs, summarising them in paragraphs 2.46 – 2.52 as:

- The changing needs of the logistics sector – with reference to the need for a network of SRFIs to aid sustainable distribution and the changing needs of the ports and retail sectors as examples of the evolving logistics industry.
- Rail freight growth – described in the context of additional port capacity (e.g. at Felixstowe North and London Gateway) which will lead to a significant increase in logistics operations, and increase the need for SRFI to reduce dependence on road freight. The NPS refers to freight forecasts, although additional forecasts have been produced since – also see below;
- Environmental – with recognition of the strategic benefits which drive the need for more SRFIs with regard to reducing carbon dioxide emissions (and other emissions), but also the need to 'minimise' local land use and transport impacts;
- UK economy, national and local benefits – the NPS recognises the considerable benefits for the local economy with regards to employment growth, but also skills development.

- 2.29. It is explicit in the NPS that Government believes it is important to facilitate the development of the intermodal rail freight industry as part of a 'low carbon and sustainable transport system'. To help facilitate the increased shift of freight from road to rail Government policy is based around several key conclusions:

'a network of SRFIs is needed across the regions, to serve, regional, sub-regional and cross-regional markets' (NPS 2014, paragraph 2.54); and

'there is a compelling need for an expanded network of SRFIs' (NPS 2014, paragraph 2.56).

- 2.30. While it does not seek to identify specific sites or locations to deliver the expanded network of SRFIs sought, the NPS does include some useful general and strategic references to locational issues. In summary, the NPS policy regarding the location of SRFIs is: 'SRFI capacity needs to be provided at a wide range of locations, to provide the flexibility needed to match the changing demands of the market, possibly with traffic moving from existing RFI to new larger facilities.' (NPS 2014, paragraph 2.58)

- 2.31. In addition, the NPS includes a number of generic criteria or characteristics to describe the type of locations in which they are expected to be developed. These can be summarised as locations which:

- are located alongside the major rail routes, close to major trunk roads as well as near to the conurbations that consume the goods (paragraph 2.45);
- are accessible to likely sources of labour/workforce (paragraph 2.52)
- have good connectivity both with the road and rail networks, in particular the strategic rail freight network (para 2.54);
- are near the business markets they will serve – major urban centres, or groups of centres – and are linked to key supply chain routes (paragraph 2.56);

- 2.32. The Northampton Gateway proposals align very well with these criteria, being located on the national strategic road and rail freight networks, adjacent to the built-up area of Northampton and accessible from a number of other nearby urban areas and other communities.

Freight Growth Forecasts

- 2.33. At the time of its publication in December 2014 the NPS made reference to forecasts provided in the Network Rail 'Freight Market Study' published in October 2013. These forecasts were adopted as a robust basis for long-term planning purposes and as a demonstration of the expected "pressure" (NPS, paragraph 2.49) on the existing national road and rail networks from a predicted increase from around 23 billion tonne kms in 2011, to 44 billion tonne kms by 2033.

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- 2.34. This strategic picture provided by the forecasts of changing freight market trends and requirements, and analysis undertaken for the Department for Transport (DfT), confirms the need for an expanded network of SRFIs across the regions.
- 2.35. More recently additional strategic documents relating to rail freight have been prepared which also set out forecasts of anticipated growth and changes in the rail freight market. These include the DfT 'Rail Freight Strategy' published in September 2016 , and a number of associated documents and evidence base commissioned by the DfT. While the 2013 market study provided 'unconstrained' forecasts which remain central to the DfTs approach, the more recent work has also considered some of the constraints and other issues which could prevent realisation or delivery of the full potential growth in rail freight. This updated work identifies strong growth in a number of key rail freight markets, including containerised freight which the report says will double over the next 15 years.
- 2.36. The long-term forecasts prepared for DfT also refer to a number of other potential sectors expected to grow in the future, albeit some from a low existing base, including the potential for 'rapid' rail freight services to serve increasing demand for delivery of a range of goods associated with the retail sector.
- 2.37. Work for the DfT by AECOM and Arup, also published in September 2016 , identifies a number of interventions required to help address the constraints on the delivery of continued growth of rail freight, and to the delivery of the various associated benefits of a shift of freight from road to rail. The identified interventions include encouraging and enabling delivery of a larger network of SRFIs. In terms of supporting rail freight growth and generating strong carbon reductions this is described by Arup as "probably the most positive strategic action that can be taken"

(Section 8, page 68, 'Future Potential for Modal Shift in the UK Rail Freight Market, AECOM & Arup, Sept 2016)

Aims and Objectives of the Northampton Gateway Proposal

- 2.38. The Northampton Gateway proposal seeks to respond to the increasing market demand and need for rail freight interchanges in the UK as outlined above. The proposal would provide rail-served warehousing and freight interchange facilities at a strategic location on the national rail and road networks. In addition, it aims to respond directly to existing policy guidance which recognises there is a need for an expanded network of SRFIs.
- 2.39. It aims to deliver opportunities to increase the proportion of freight moved by rail which could deliver environmental and congestion benefits as part of wider and national policy initiatives.

- 2.40. At the local level the proposals will, through direct and significant investment in the road infrastructure, vastly improve a major congestion hot spot at M1 Junction 15 and provide improvements to both local and regional road-users. The proposed provision of a new Bypass to the village of Roade is a response to the anticipated likely traffic impacts as a result of the SRFI, including a potentially significant relative increase in HGV movements as a proportion of total traffic through the village.
- 2.41. Northampton Gateway would attract new inward investment and business growth, creating additional direct employment and other indirect economic benefits. The proposal would provide new employment in a growing economic sector, and would directly support a wide range of other economic sectors both in the local area and beyond. Direct employment once fully operational and complete is estimated to be in the region of between 6,000 and 7500 jobs based on standard densities, and assuming full implementation of the mezzanine floorspace allowed for in the proposals.

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3. OVERVIEW OF THE POTENTIAL OR LIKELY IMPACTS OF NORTHAMPTON GATEWAY

- 3.1 The Northampton Gateway proposal could have a range of potential effects on the local area, as well as at the strategic level. This includes economic and social effects and impacts as well as physical and environmental effects or impacts.
- 3.2 As with any large development scheme, it will provide a mixture of potentially beneficial or positive effects as well as some potentially adverse local effects. As an experienced developer, including with regard to bringing forward a recent SRFI (NSIP) project in Leicestershire, the applicant is aware that a considered and high-quality design and masterplan can reduce the likelihood of many adverse local impacts, and minimise the residual effects.
- 3.3 As is referred elsewhere in this report, an Environmental Statement (ES) is being prepared as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) required for the application. This is required to ensure that decision makers consider the environmental impacts when deciding whether or not to proceed with a project or proposal. The EIA process can also highlight the opportunities for a sensitive design and masterplan to minimise or even eliminate many of the potential adverse effects.
- 3.4 In the following sections, a distinction is made between various parts of the proposed development site area, as follows:
- “main site” - the SRFI site itself lying between the M1 motorway and the Northampton Loop line, along with the immediately associated highway works at Junction 15 and access works on the A508
- “bypass corridor” - the corridors within which the alternative alignments of the proposed Roade bypass are contained.
- “proposed development” - all the development within the order limits (within the red line) .

Environmental Statement (ES)

- 3.5 The purpose of the ES is to draw together, in a systematic way, an assessment of a project's likely significant environmental effects. This helps to ensure that the importance of the predicted effects, and the scope for reducing or mitigating them, are properly understood. The ES will be submitted alongside the application for development consent in 2017.

- 3.6 At present, preparation of the ES is ongoing with a range of surveys and assessments underway. The results of the early assessment work are being used to inform the initial (non-statutory) consultation being held in December 2016/January 2017, and have fed into the parameters plans and other information being displayed. The latest assessment work is being presented in an Environmental Report which is being made available as part of the consultation process.
- 3.7 The Environmental Report provides detail about the proposals under the topics and themes which will be included in the future ES, and, where possible, also identifies the likely key issues and impacts which will feature in the ongoing assessment work. The Environmental Report therefore provides an early basis of a future ES report, and in due course fuller draft ES chapters will be available. It is intended that an advanced draft of the ES will be available for the second stage consultation. During that, statutory, consultation stage to be held in mid-2017 copies of the advanced draft ES chapters will be available via the project website and located in local libraries and other places.
- 3.8 The ES will comprise a number of themed chapters, each dealing with a different aspect of the proposals and its likely effects. The chapter headings currently identified are as follows:
- Socio-Economic aspects
 - Landscape & Visual Effects
 - Geology, Soil and Groundwater
 - Ecology and Nature Conservation
 - Water Resources and Drainage
 - Noise and Vibration
 - Air Quality
 - Cultural Heritage
 - Lighting
 - Transportation
 - Agricultural Land
- 3.9 While the ES itself will contain a full chapter on each of the above, the summary below contains the principal elements of the ES expected to be of most interest to the public, informed specifically by the comments and discussions had during informal dialogue with stakeholders to date.

Socio-Economic

- 3.10 The socio-economic effects are considered primarily in terms of effects on employment and the economy as a key economic indicator. Economic benefits are usually expressed in terms of Gross Value Added (GVA) which is a measure of workplace income (wages and profits) generated by the development through the production of goods or services.

- 3.11 The employment impacts of the proposals will be assessed for both the construction phase and the operational phase. An initial assessment of the likely socio-economic effects of the development suggests it is overwhelmingly positive. Using standard ratios of floorspace to employment prepared by the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) based on sites and developments elsewhere suggests that the proposal will result in somewhere between 6,000 and 7,500 additional jobs once fully operational. The upper end of this figure assumes that the proposed mezzanine space is all fully delivered.
- 3.12 These jobs are expected to be filled by people from across the local and wider area, with key sources of labour expected to be in the areas around Northampton, Daventry, Wellingborough, Towcester, and Milton Keynes, as well as nearby villages.
- 3.13 The construction period will bring important and temporary benefits in terms of employment and growth in the local supply chain related to construction, the operational development would bring significant and positive economic effects at both the local and regional level. Construction is likely to require around 900 'worker years' which equates to support for some 90 permanent jobs in the construction industry throughout development of the proposals.
- 3.14 The initial economic assessment undertaken using Gross Value Added per filled job indicates that the development would generate an additional £316 million annually across the assessment area which is focused on Northamptonshire local authority areas as well as Milton Keynes.

Landscape and visual effects

- 3.15 A Landscape and Visual Impact assessment is being prepared as part of the Environmental Statement. The assessment will consider the likely effects of the Proposed Development, including the Roade Bypass.
- 3.16 Both the main site and bypass corridor comprises primarily arable and pasture farmland, and the surrounding area contains a mixture of land-uses including major transport and development infrastructure (including the M1 motorway and railway infrastructure) and also includes settlements ranging from the urban area of Northampton to smaller villages in South Northamptonshire, as well as farmland and woodland.

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- 3.17 The main site's context and topography provide opportunities to develop a strong landscape strategy to help mitigate and minimise the impacts of the proposals. Variations in ground levels will require earthworks to provide plateau for the proposed buildings, and this will result in large parts of the development plots being effectively sunk into the ground. At the western/northern end of the main site, the proposed ground levels will be significantly lower than the existing, by up to around 7m. In addition, the proposals include an extensive and robust landscape framework devised to provide a strong 'green' structure to the site and effective mitigation for the potential visual and landscape effects.
- 3.18 Using the earth moved to create the development plateau, the proposals include a significant landscaped bund around the perimeter of the main site to the north/east (along the M1), west and south-west along the boundary with the Northampton Loop railway. This will sit in a significant landscaped corridor running around the site, with the bund being up to around 18m higher than the development plateau in places, and including extensive tree planting. In addition, existing woodland and planted areas will be conserved and retained within the site (e.g. the woodlands known as Churchills, and Highgate). The significant bunding with the new and existing woodland and tree planting will substantially screen the proposed development from outside view, and greatly reduce the visual impacts. The strong landscaped led approach to the site's boundaries will also help to minimise and soften the landscape impacts, although even so the proposals would clearly result in notable change to the landscape. The scale and nature of that change, and the likely residual effects of it, will be fully assessed in the final ES.
- 3.19 There are numerous key 'receptors' of landscape and visual change – these include primarily the nearest communities to the Proposed Development, including Collingtree, Milton Malsor, Roade, and Blisworth. However, other receptors include users of the rights of way network, as well as road users although these are not considered to be as sensitive to change as those living or walking in the countryside. The likely effects on all relevant receptors will be assessed as part of the Environmental Statement.
- 3.20 Similarly, the landscape and visual impacts of the proposed Roade Bypass will also be assessed. The proposed alignment of the Bypass has not yet been fixed and the initial consultation process is seeking views on which of the two identified potential routes is preferred. However, of the two routes, one has been identified as being preferred (the blue route) based on early assessment work having considered a range of potential environmental effects. This includes initial judgements about the potential landscape and visual effects of the Bypass, with the preferred route being located lower in the landscape than the alternative route identified which could have additional impacts on the wider landscape.
- 3.21 Subsequent care and attention to the detailed design, implementation and subsequent management of these landscape and associated green infrastructure proposals will be important to ensure that the likely effects are further minimised wherever possible and the identified opportunities for enhancement.

Ecology and Nature Conservation

- 3.22 Habitat and faunal surveys across the application areas as a whole are being undertaken and some will extend into 2017 in accordance with best practice, regulations, and the seasonal nature of many species specific surveys.
- 3.23 There are no statutory designated ecological sites, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), within or immediately adjacent to the main site. Surveys undertaken at the main site have recorded the presence of some habitats of ecological interest, including woodland, hedgerows and watercourses as well as a number of mature trees. Some features have been designated as Local Wildlife Sites or highlighted as candidates for this non-statutory designation, including Highgate woodland and the Junction 15 Grassland potential Local Wildlife Site. These woodland areas are of at least local importance in ecological terms, as well as having other benefits (for example with regard to landscape and visual issues). However, the majority of the SRFI site consists of intensively managed arable fields and to a lesser extent improved grassland, habitats which are of low intrinsic ecological interest or value.
- 3.24 At its closest point the main site is approximately 5km from the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA/SSSI which is located to the north-east of the site. The potential for any impacts from the Proposed Development on the SPA/SSSI is being assessed, and is primarily focused on the impacts on over-wintering birds known to use the site.
- 3.25 The Roade Bypass corridor alignments are also dominated by intensively managed arable fields, with other habitats including grassland, hedgerows, a watercourse and some isolated areas of scrub. There is a geological SSSI (rather than an ecological SSSI) within part of the Roade Bypass corridor associated with the railway cutting, although this area also corresponds to the Roade Cutting potential Local Wildlife Site, which is of at least local importance. An area of unimproved grassland that has been identified that will be more comprehensively characterized by further Phase 2 survey, but is considered likely to be of greater than local importance (County-National importance).
- 3.26 Faunal surveys undertaken to date have recorded the presence of Great Crested Newts (GCN), badgers, bats and some important bird species within the application site (including Golden Plover). Appropriate measures are proposed in the design of the proposals to retain habitats for these species wherever possible. In the case of GCN, all breeding ponds will be retained and unaffected by the proposals. Where the nature of the proposed development does not allow for habitat retention, a comprehensive mitigation strategy will be implemented to offer replacement habitats, with enhancements for biodiversity incorporated where possible.

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- 3.27 However, the significant landscaping and tree and hedgerow planting, and new wetland areas proposed on-site provides opportunities to deliver an increased mix and scale of habitat diversity, and achieve gains for biodiversity within the site.

Water Resources and Drainage

- 3.28 The Proposed Development is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 (low probability of flooding). Flood Zone 1 is defined as land assessed as having a less than 1 in 1000 annual probability of river or sea flooding in any year (<0.1%) and is the lowest defined category of flood risk.
- 3.29 Both the main site and the bypass corridor are currently subject to a generally natural regime of surface water run-off and infiltration with the main drainage outlet from the main site being via a tributary of the Wooton Brook, itself a tributary of the River Nene. Whilst the Proposed Development site area is considered to be at low risk of river flooding, there are known instances of flooding downstream along the Wooton Brook, and it is clear that without introducing specific measures the proposed development (particularly the main site) could exacerbate that risk as a result of the increased rate and volume of surface runoff.
- 3.30 However, the surface water drainage strategy included within the proposals will ensure that surface water will be managed appropriately to ensure that the rate, and quality, of water leaving the main site is not increased or compromised. In simple terms, a number of mitigation and design measures are proposed to ensure the development does not create additional flood risk or negative effects in terms of drainage of surface water elsewhere in the local catchment area.
- 3.31 The measures proposed on the main site include the provision of water storage areas (ponds or basins) as part of a 'Sustainable Drainage System' to prevent an adverse impact to the wider catchment. These features will control the rate of water run-off, and the design and assessment work to date suggests that this approach will result in a reduced risk of flooding downstream during periods of heavy rain by restricting the rate of run-off from the site to levels below those experienced currently. Therefore, the emerging drainage strategy is expected to deliver beneficial impacts to locations downstream of the site through more predictable discharge into watercourses during flood events.
- 3.32 The drainage strategy for the Bypass corridor will be developed as the precise alignment of the route is confirmed. However, as for the main site, a drainage strategy will be devised which ensures rates of run-off do not create or exacerbate risks of flooding nearby.

Noise and Vibration

- 3.33 The noise assessment work is ongoing. The assessment will consider the likely impacts of both the construction phase and the operational phase of the Proposed Development, including the potential noise impact from traffic (road and rail), as well as from the use of the SRFI once complete. In addition, the assessment will also consider the potential vibration effects that would primarily relate to the increased rail activity inherently associated with the development of a rail freight terminal.
- 3.34 Initial baseline monitoring has been undertaken at a number of key locations, selected to be representative of the existing noise sensitive receivers near the main site and Roade Bypass. Further monitoring is required which is being undertaken. The aim of the surveys is to quantify the existing baseline noise and vibration conditions against which the impacts of the proposed development can be assessed.
- 3.35 A key input to the assessment of the potential noise impacts will be data from the detailed transport and traffic modelling. This will rely on outputs from the Northamptonshire Strategic Transport Model which is likely to be available in early 2017. Consequently, until the noise and vibration monitoring and transport modelling are completed, it is not possible to provide detailed information about the likely noise effects of the proposals.
- 3.36 From the work carried out so far, however, it is possible to provide an initial indication of some of the likely noise impacts and effects. These results will be confirmed or otherwise once the detailed assessment has been completed.
- 3.37 For properties to the east of the M1, the anticipated levels of sound from operational activities at the SRFI would be such that little to no adverse impact is expected to occur. This is due to the inherent mitigation provided by the landscaping and the generally higher ambient noise levels because the receptors are close to the M1. It is expected that the development would result in at most a negligible or minor adverse impact at these properties.
- 3.38 Properties to the west of the M1 are more likely to experience operational noise from the SRFI due to their relatively close proximity to the site boundary and generally lower ambient noise levels. The scheme design includes inherent mitigation which will help to minimise any adverse impacts. There is also likely to be increased railway noise at receptors in close proximity to the Northampton Loop railway line due to the additional freight train movements (although this increase is expected to be gradual and over a relatively long time period). The extent of this impact will be investigated and determined in the subsequent assessment work.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 3.39 There will be an increase in traffic on the local road network associated with vehicles travelling to and from the main site. When added to the existing baseline flows on these roads, these vehicles are anticipated to result in a relatively small increase in road traffic noise which is unlikely to be particularly noticeable at most nearby receptors and therefore will generally result in at most negligible or minor adverse impact.
- 3.40 The proposed Roade bypass is anticipated to reduce the volume of traffic on the A508 through the centre of Roade, noticeably reducing the traffic noise and having a beneficial impact at receptors close to that part of the A508. However, the bypass is likely to increase the traffic noise experienced on the outskirts of Roade near the bypass. The assessment work to be undertaken in due course will consider what mitigation might reasonably be required to minimise any adverse impacts at these receivers.
- 3.41 There is also potential for an increase in perceived vibration at the nearest dwellings to the existing railway in Milton Malsor, though the extent of this impact cannot be determined until modelling and prediction work have been completed.

Air Quality

- 3.42 Impacts on air quality will be assessed for both the construction phases and the operational phases of the proposed development. A key input to the detailed modelling of likely impacts on air quality is the modelled transport data, therefore the detailed assessment has not yet been undertaken. However, in advance of that data being available, it is possible to begin to understand and assess the existing air quality context for the proposed development.
- 3.43 As a result of local air quality monitoring, there are a number of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) designated in the local area relating to high levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) associated with major roads. The closest AQMA is the M1 AQMA running along the north-eastern edge of the site past Collingtree, in Northampton Borough. Another AQMA is located along the A45 in Wootton, and South Northamptonshire District Council undertakes air quality monitoring on the A508 in Roade, where elevated concentrations of NO₂ are experienced as a result of traffic congestion along narrow roads.
- 3.44 A key basis for assessing air quality is the UK Air Quality Strategy (UKAQS), which sets a number of “standard” concentrations – referred to as AQS concentrations – that are to be achieved at sensitive receptor locations across the UK by various “objective” dates.
- 3.45 NO₂ is the main focus of air quality issues locally. Neither council undertakes monitoring of fine particulates (PM₁₀), as NO₂ is considered to be the primary pollutant of concern in the area.

- 3.46 Monitoring data indicates that annual mean concentrations of NO₂ in Northampton and South Northamptonshire tend to be generally below the 40Qg.m⁻³ AQS, even at some busy town centre locations. There appears to be a slight downward trend in NO₂ concentrations at the Northampton monitors, broadly in line with that indicated in the UK wide predictions made by Defra. Background annual mean NO₂ concentrations were 65% below the AQS in 2013. However, local monitoring data from 'roadside monitors' shows that NO₂ levels sometimes exceed the AQS levels at some roadside locations.
- 3.47 Additional air quality monitoring is now being carried out by Roxhill to inform modelling and impact assessments. Monitoring locations include: four locations in Collingtree to monitor emissions from the M1; one adjacent to West Lodge Cottages on the A508; and one on the main site as a background location. It is intended that the monitoring tubes will be in situ for 12 months, in order to collect representative annual mean concentrations (pollution concentrations tend to vary throughout the year, as the result of seasonal patterns in both meteorological conditions and emissions). However, the initial results indicate that the most significant existing air quality issues are associated with the M1 motorway, and locations on the eastern side of the M1.
- 3.48 As referred to above, the main assessment of likely effects cannot be undertaken until the detailed traffic data is available from the transport assessment. The Air Quality assessment will therefore be undertaken in 2017, and will be reported on during the later consultation process.
- 3.49 However, at the strategic level, the provision of an SRFI will directly enable a reduction in HGV traffic, with every freight train typically removing between 43 and 76 lorries from the roads according to Government data contained in the Rail Freight Strategy (Sept 2016). Therefore, in strategic terms, the proposals are likely to contribute towards a reduction in pollution and an improvement in air quality.
- 3.50 At the local level, the impacts are likely to be more varied. The Roade Bypass is expected to deliver significant improvements to air quality in the village as a result of greatly reduced through traffic and congestion. An increase in traffic on the M1 is likely to cause small but localised increases in pollution.

Transport

- 3.51 The methodology for assessing the transport impacts of the proposals is being discussed and agreed through a Transport Working Group consisting of the local highways authority (Northamptonshire County Council) and Highways England, and the key source of modelling data will be the Northamptonshire Strategic Transport Model which is currently being updated provided it is available for use from early 2017.

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- 3.52 Junction 15 of the M1 is known to be a major local bottleneck and a key congestion 'hot-spot'. Indeed, recent survey data shows that the junction currently sees average peak hour traffic levels at around 127% of the junction's operating capacity. This significant exceedance of the junction's capacity results in significant congestion and queuing, and highly unpredictable journey times for local and other road-users.
- 3.53 The Northampton Gateway proposals would deliver a significant programme of improvements to Junction 15 as part of a wider package of transport and traffic measures aimed at improving access to the motorway, and enabling and encouraging access to the site by a range of modes of transport. It is anticipated that the emerging design to the reconfiguration of Junction 15 will provide a 30% improvement in capacity across the morning and evening peak hour periods, ensuring sufficient capacity to not only serve the traffic generated by the proposed development, but also to reduce queuing and improve journey times and reliability for existing road users at the junction.
- 3.54 Existing walking and cycling routes will be enhanced or extended, and some existing physical barriers to walking and cycling addressed as part of the changes proposed to Junction 15 and along the A508 in particular.
- 3.55 The Roade Bypass will remove strategic and through-traffic from the village centre, and reduce congestion.
- 3.56 The detailed assessment of transport and traffic impacts will be undertaken once the Northamptonshire Strategic Transport Model is available in early 2017. Key parts of the network expected to feature in the ongoing analysis and dialogue with the transport bodies will be, in addition to Junction 15 and the proposed Roade Bypass, any impacts on the A45, as well as on the wider network. This will include examining the effect of the proposed Bypass and improved A508 and Junction 15 on traffic flows and driver route choice, particularly through some villages to the west and south of the site.

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4. CONSULTATION ISSUES AND PROCESS, CONSULTATION PROGRAMME, AND PROJECT CONTACTS

- 4.1. Non-statutory consultation and engagement is now underway as part of an initial stage of public consultation. Indeed, dialogue with local bodies about distribution development in this location has been underway since 2014 when an earlier proposal was made for distribution development on part of the main site in response to the requirements of an existing local employer. That earlier work, and results of the consultation undertaken, has helped shape and inform the SRFI proposals.
- 4.2. A statutory consultation stage will be held later in 2017 when the proposals have been further progressed, and more specific detail about the proposals and the likely impacts is available.
- 4.3. Prior to the statutory consultation Roxhill Developments Ltd will prepare a Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) to explain the ways in which they will consult with the public. Once prepared the SoCC will be available via the website, and also in printed form at locations to be agreed. The consultation strategy for both the non-statutory consultation (Dec 2016/Jan 2017) and the statutory consultation (Later in 2017) will be underpinned by a number of strands of activity and routes by which local people can comment on, or ask questions about, the proposals. These include:
- The project website – www.northampton-gateway.co.uk
 - At public exhibitions where information will be presented, and members of the consultant team will be available to discuss the proposals. The initial consultation events are being held at the Hilton Hotel in Collingtree as follows:
 - Monday 12th December 1.30pm – 7.30pm;
 - Tuesday 13th December 1.30pm – 7.30pm;
 - Wednesday 14th December 1.30pm – 7.30pm.
 - By post to: Northampton Gateway SRFI
PO Box 10570
Nottingham
NG2 9RG
 - Questions and comments can also be left via a project telephone line: 01788 538440
- 4.4. In addition, other consultation and engagement activity is also underway and ongoing with a wide range of statutory consultees and other bodies, including the Environment Agency, Highways Agency, Natural England, Network Rail, and others including landowners, local authorities and parish councils.
- 4.5. The expectation is that the application for Development Consent will be made to PINS in the late summer or early Autumn of 2017.

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- 4.4. The final application submission to the Planning Inspectorate will include a Consultation Report which will provide a description of the range of consultation and engagement activity throughout the evolution of the Northampton Gateway project. This will include a full and detailed description of the non-statutory and statutory consultation and engagement.

Project contacts

- 4.5. As referred to above, the website will be kept up to date with the latest project information and documents. In addition to the public exhibitions, the project team can be contacted via the website (the project email address is contact-us@northampton-gateway.co.uk), or via the information phonenumber and postal address given above.