

Mark Redding
Ref 20010482
Northampton Gateway TR050006
Written Representation (deadline 6th November 2018)

1. I strongly object to the Northampton Gateway application for two fundamental reasons:

- I believe it to be an abuse of policy; namely the National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPS NN).
- The Application is non-compliant with planning legislation including the Planning Act 2008 (as enacted by the NPS NN and Environmental Impact Assessment Directive) and The Town and Country Planning Act 2011.

2. I would expect an Applicant with a true interest in **effectively** furthering the Government's aims of a modal shift to rail and a reduction in carbon emissions to do the following:

3. Firstly, to complete a detailed **national** study taking into account: the existing freight network; infrastructure limitations; employment constraints; economics; need and proximity to markets, in order to establish the most appropriate region for the siting of the next strategic interchange. Secondly, having identified the appropriate region for the siting of the next node of the strategic network (maybe in an area currently poorly served), the Applicant would then draw up a list of potential alternatives (as required by policy) in that region and decide, via a credible comparative analysis, which would best satisfy policy objectives and create the least damaging environmental and social impacts. Thirdly, the Applicant would then draw up detailed plans for the chosen, and (hopefully) most appropriate, site.

4. Roxhill have not followed this process. They have brought forward a site on which they have attempted to develop two (non-rail connected) schemes which have been rejected by the local planning authority (due to the fact that there is sufficient B8 (and rail served) allocation for the local plan period up until 2029). Roxhill have consequently, as a last ditch attempt to realise a profit on land over which they have had options for many years, added a rail connection in order to transfer the decision making process to an (alternative) higher authority.

5. [On the 12th May 2016 Roxhill invited members of the community to a meeting to show them their proposal for a non-rail connected scheme. At this meeting they declared they had absolutely no intention of promoting another SRFI after their experience with the East Midlands Gateway. This stance was reversed when the normal planning avenues were found to be closed. On the 27th September 2016 the same group were invited back to be shown plans for an SRFI]

6. Roxhill have inverted the (due and proper) process by bringing forward a scheme on land over which they already had options and have THEN attempted to make it look like an NSIP through the appointment of consultants to dress it up appropriately, and the engagement of legal counsel to attempt to paper over the significant cracks in the submission resulting from their rushing the application through the examination process.

7. Roxhill's lawyers have attempted to manipulate the NPS by suggesting that the consideration of alternative sites applies only to road or rail schemes^[1] despite having produced an alternative sites

assessment for their previous East Midlands Gateway SRFI development. Such an attempt at manipulation suggests that Roxhill either has no faith that their site is in the right region (or that it is even the best alternative in this region) or that they have rushed their application in order to get ahead of Rail Central in the examination process. Either way the absence of such an assessment is a significant breach of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive.

8. [Roxhill's narrow and cursory comparison of their site to (only) Rail Central is irrelevant as, strategically, Rail Central is the same site: it would serve exactly the same markets (and draw from the same employment pool), would be reliant on almost exactly the same sections of the strategic rail and road networks and would produce similar social and environmental impacts]

9. To bring forward a (non-rail connected) site and then attempt (subsequently), through much obfuscation and manipulation, to make it look like an SRFI is tantamount to abuse of policy. Not to follow the prescriptive requirements of the NPS and associated regulations (including the EIA Directive) is a significant non-compliance. Either of these facts should, I believe, have resulted in the Application being declined for examination; but it was not.

10. Roxhill's continual referral to the securing of the GRS (aggregate) train slots strongly suggests that they are intending to rely on these to satisfy the minimum 4 train requirement and have limited ambition to promote any further modal shift – why else would they make such a deal of these paths? I would, again, contend that this is an abuse of policy. That the market study focused on the demand for big sheds, rather than providing any tangible evidence of potential for modal shift, further highlights Roxhill's apparent lack of commitment to policy objectives.

11. If Roxhill truly believed that this was the most appropriate location for the next node in a strategic freight network, or had any interest in facilitating a modal shift for the good of the nation, then why were their two previous schemes not rail connected? The landscape has not changed significantly since the previous two applications. In fact the case for this SRFI has significantly weakened with the consenting of DIRFT 3 and EMG which still have considerable undeveloped rail-connected capacity.

12. In the absence of strategic oversight or a clearer definition from Government on what constitutes a 'strategic' location, responsibility for ensuring that an effective national freight network emerges rests solely on the shoulders of each and every Examining Authority both individually and, even more importantly, collectively.

References

1. 10th July 2017 Morag Thomson of Eversheds enquiry to PINs (as recorded in "s51 advice")