

Northampton Gateway Rail Freight Interchange (TR050006)

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I would like to register my strong objection to this proposed development. I base this decision in consideration of the following:

Suitability of the Location:

The simple proximity of a rail line and a motorway to each other, does not, in my opinion, make it *automatically* suitable to build a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange.

The site chosen for the proposed development, is currently undulating farmland with added trees and hedges and forms a pleasing natural buffer between the motorway and the Northampton Loop rail line as well as between the edge of urban Northampton and the rural locality of the villages of Roade, Blisworth and Milton Malsor. In addition, it provides Collingtree village with a sense of rurality, to offset the encroachment of Northampton boundaries.

All this will be irrevocably destroyed by the presence of high, unsightly warehouses and cranes. This can only ever be *partially screened*, despite the best endeavours of the developers. More lost countryside; more creeping development which runs counter to local planning strategy.

Should this development really proceed in this location?

The impact of changing traffic flow:

The projected increase in traffic numbers from HGVs, cars, and other assorted vehicles will have a serious detrimental effect on the local area.

Having lived in Blisworth for 40 years and driven around all the villages in my capacity as a general practitioner, I can unequivocally state that the proposed changes to access to and from the A508 at the Courteenhall Road junction, will be extremely inconvenient to villagers, farmers, local tradespeople and emergency services. The proposal is ill thought out.

We are keenly aware that when there are problems on the M1 and A43, traffic diverts through the villages and there is no reason to think this will be any different should this proposed SRFI be built. The consequences will be increased serious congestion, pollution, inconvenience, and further erosion of village life. The roads around

Northampton, including the M1, are already seriously congested at times and a huge increase in traffic volumes will only add to this.

Environmental impact:

This will be detrimental due to the combined effect of:

- Loss of green space and its effect on mental well being
- The visual impact of the industrialisation of a rural landscape
- The combined effect of air, noise and light pollution
- The effect of increased traffic flow and issues when there are major road problems

Pollution:

It is becoming increasingly clear that the UK has a serious problem from *air pollution*, particularly from diesel engines. This does not look as if it will be solved quickly. Air quality monitoring in the locality has already revealed issues on the A43 and M1, both of which are feeder roads for the development. Air pollution has serious health risks for people, including respiratory disease, heart disease and cancers, as well as being unpleasant to experience and to see.

This development will see a large increase in traffic volumes and consequently a large increase in *noise* pollution from traffic. The workings on the site, over a 24-hour period, will also see noise increased from railway traffic and crane working.

If you have ever seen container cranes in operation, you will know that when they are moving, they emit warning sounds that are loud and penetrating. This is likely to be highly annoying, especially at night. Sound travels a long way in the dark and houses are not far away from this proposed SRFI.

There will also be significant *light pollution* from the floodlights needed to illuminate the site. These will be visible from a considerable distance, and since they will be in operation throughout all the hours of darkness, they will constitute a significant nuisance. Light pollution may also impact on local wildlife.

Economic viability:

As a proposed road & rail freight interchange, one of the important components of this duality is the supply of rail traffic. There has been conflicting supply of detail regarding the capacity of the railway to

supply enough freight traffic to keep this proposal operational. Issues in this respect are:

- How suitable is the Northampton Loop line for providing the required volume of freight traffic to make this venture viable?
- What is the view of Network Rail?
- What, if any, are the proposed upgrades to the line through Northampton?
- Is the priority for rail traffic in the day going to be the accommodation of more passengers?
- What will be the influence on viability of alternative routes from the East Coast ports to other SRFIs?
- What will be the influence of the expansion of DIRFT and the inevitable competition for road and rail freight traffic?

An important consideration is what will happen if the RFI is not viable. There is a high degree of suspicion that the fall-back position is for the site to become one huge warehousing complex and hence a road-road interchange. There is already a surfeit of empty warehouses in Northamptonshire, we do not need more.

Compliance with National Policy:

This is supposedly a *strategic* development, yet with a marked concentration of SRFIs in the East and South Midlands that are either in existence, under construction, or proposed (two right next to each other in South Northants) there does not seem to be anything strategic about it. If this is supposedly a National Infrastructure development, then surely some National strategic planning needs to be exerted on all these proposals and the gaps in provision around the country need to be addressed.

I return to my starting comment that just because a railway and a motorway happen to be close together, it does not automatically mean they should be chosen for a SRFI.

A R Hillier

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