



NORTHAMPTON  
**GATEWAY**  
STRATEGIC RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE

**STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND BETWEEN  
THE APPLICANT AND NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL  
(VARIOUS MATTERS)**

**DOCUMENT 7.10**

The Northampton Gateway Rail Freight Interchange Order 201X

STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND BETWEEN THE APPLICANT AND  
NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL (VARIOUS MATTERS) | 6 NOVEMBER 2018

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November 2018

**STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND**

**for**

**NORTHAMPTON GATEWAY RFI**

**on**

**PLANNING POLICY, LOCAL CONTEXT and ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

**between**

**OXALIS PLANNING for Roxhill (Junction 15) Ltd**

**and**

**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **1. SCOPE**

1.1 This Statement addresses strategic and local land-use and planning issues in the context of sub-regional and local objectives, as well as a shared position with regard to key local impacts identified in the submitted Environmental Statement. It has been prepared as part of the information accompanying the application for a Development Consent Order for the Northampton Gateway project.

1.2 The Statement is structured under the following headings:

2. *Parties to the Statement of Common Ground*
3. *Site description and context*
4. *Planning history and Project Description*
5. *National policy alignment*
6. *Sub-regional context and strategic alignment*
7. *Local policy, and likely impacts and benefits*
8. *Conclusions*

1.3 In this Statement reference to the SRFI Site refers to the main development site bordered by Collingtree Road, M1 motorway, the A508 and the Northampton Loop Rail Line as shown on the Parameters Plan (Document 2.10). Reference to the Development is to the entire development proposed to be authorised by the Development Consent Order comprising the development on the SRFI Site and the highway works, including proposed upgrades and alterations to Junctions 15 and 15a of the M1 motorway, the A45 and the proposed Roade Bypass.

## **2. PARTIES TO THE STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND**

2.1. Signatories to this Statement are:

- Northampton Borough Council (NBC)
- Oxalis Planning for Roxhill (Junction 15) Ltd.

## **3. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL**

3.1 In summary:

- An intermodal freight terminal including container storage and HGV parking, rail sidings to serve individual warehouses, and the provision of an aggregates facility as part of the intermodal freight terminal, with the capability to also provide a 'rapid rail freight' facility.
- Up to 468,000 sq. m (approximately 5 million sq. ft.) (gross internal area) of warehousing and ancillary buildings, with additional floorspace provided in the form of mezzanines.
- A secure, dedicated, HGV parking area of approximately 120 spaces including driver welfare facilities to meet the needs of HGV's visiting the site or intermodal terminal.
- New road infrastructure and works to the existing road network, including the provision of a new access and associated works to the A508, a new bypass to the village of Roade, improvements to Junction 15 and to Junction 15A of the M1 motorway, the A45, and other highway

improvements at junctions on the local highway network and related traffic management measures.

- Strategic landscaping and tree planting, including diverted public rights of way; and earthworks and demolition of existing structures on the main site.

#### **4. SITE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT**

It is agreed that:

- 3.1 The SRFI Site is located on land to the west of M1 Junction 15, west of the A508 road, and east of the Northampton Loop railway line. The application site includes land associated with the M1 and A45 which falls within Northampton Borough, with the majority of the application site and most of the proposed highway mitigation schemes, located in South Northamptonshire. The administrative boundary between Northampton Borough and South Northamptonshire District Council is shown on the Location Plan (Document 2.2).
- 3.2 The proposed highway works consist of new roads and improvements to existing roads and are located in the vicinity of the proposed SRFI Site and in the 'A508 corridor' – this is described in further detail later in this Statement. In addition, to the highway works outlined above in paragraph 1.3, this includes a package of relatively small-scale improvements at a number of local junctions and other parts of the local highway network in the vicinity of the SRFI Site.
- 3.3 The SRFI Site is well located in relation to the strategic road network, at junction 15 of the M1 motorway, and close to the A45 and A5 trunk roads. The site is also well located in relation to the national rail network. The Northampton Loop railway line runs to the immediate west of the site, and the SRFI would connect directly to this railway line with new north and south facing connections. The loop line links to the West Coast Main Line (WCML) to the south of the site, as well as to the north-west of Northampton.
- 3.4 The WCML is the main rail freight line in the UK, carrying approximately 40% of all rail freight at some stage in its journey between ports, manufacturers, distribution hubs, and markets or end-users.
- 3.5 The SRFI Site and Roade Bypass site are mostly in agricultural use. Collingtree Conservation Area is located to the north east of the site, beyond the M1, and contains a number of listed buildings.
- 3.6 The strategic transport infrastructure in the form of the M1 motorway, and urban development associated with Northampton at Collingtree and Grange Park has some influence on the context and character of the SRFI Site and immediate surroundings. The presence of these features have been recognised in the Landscape and Visual Assessment undertaken as part of the Environmental Statement, and also in the Noise and Air Quality assessments which include assessments of the existing (baseline) conditions.
- 3.7 The existing landform across the proposed SRFI Site varies, with the highest land to the west of the site, and the lowest land in the east closest to the A508 road. The SRFI Site thus sits within a shallow but enclosed landform setting, with a general aspect towards the existing urban edge and the motorway junction. A ridge of higher land within the site runs approximately

parallel to the Northampton Loop railway and the highest point within the SRFI Site lies close to the western boundary and the two areas of existing woodland (Churchills and Highgate) which lie relatively elevated within the SRFI Site. In the north western corner of the SRFI Site the land falls gently towards Milton Malsor, but it is only this far north western corner of the SRFI Site that falls away from the motorway and existing urban edge. In combination the relatively enclosed topography, and the existing woodland features, provide opportunities to help screen the site from viewpoints west and south-west as part of an earthworks and landscaping strategy. In respect of the site's relationship with Northampton Borough, the M1 is in cutting as it runs past the SRFI Site to the north east, with the southern edge of the village of Collingtree within Northampton on the opposite (eastern) side of the M1. Existing tree planting on both sides of the motorway mean there is relatively limited intervisibility at present between the site and the southernmost residential properties in Collingtree. This is partly because much of the site currently sits below the level of the embankment associated with the cutting which contains this part of the M1, and due to the open nature of the site. Public Right of Way KX13 extends from Collingtree across a footbridge over the M1 in a south westerly direction towards Blisworth. Notwithstanding the presence of extensive existing planting, parts of the site is widely visible from the footbridge.

#### **4. PLANNING HISTORY AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

It is agreed that:

- 4.1. There is no relevant planning history on the SRFI Site apart from an earlier planning application for development on part of the site to deliver a new national head-quarters and national distribution centre for a locally-based manufacturer which was withdrawn in 2015.
- 4.2. The Northampton Gateway proposals are for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange which meets the criteria for a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) contained in the Planning Act 2008 and the guidance contained in the National Networks National Policy Statement
- 4.3. The ES (Chapter 2 Description of Development), as well as the Planning Statement provide a full description of the development.
- 4.4. It is agreed that the Parameters Plan (document 2.10) provides a suitable framework, including limitations and constraints, on the scale and location of built development to be provided on the site, and define the location of key infrastructure, including landscaping and earthworks.
- 4.5. Highway and other associated transport improvements proposed as part of the development, including a new site access will be required to appropriately mitigate the transport impacts of the development. This matter has been assessed in detail by the relevant Highway Authorities as part of a Transport Working Group which has met on an ongoing basis over an extended period. Separate Statements of Common Ground have been prepared with the Highways Authority.

## 5. NATIONAL POLICY

It is agreed that:

- 5.1. There is an explicitly positive national policy context for the development of 'a *network*' of new strategic rail freight interchanges provided by the National Policy Statement for National Networks (the NPS). The NPS is the main policy document for assessing and considering NSIP proposals, and reflects many of the policies and requirements of the NPPF.
- 5.2. The NPS of December 2014 followed national policy on SRFIs which provided a context for the importance of rail freight to economic growth. The NPS replaced and updated earlier (2011) national policy guidance for rail freight interchanges. The NPS underlines the importance of facilitating the movement of freight from road to rail, both in terms of economic development and addressing climate change. Facilitating the movement of freight from road to rail is seen as central to Government's vision for transport, and is therefore of direct relevance to the Proposed Development.
- 5.3. The NPS recognises there is a '*compelling need for an expanded network of SRFIs*' (para 2.56). Therefore, the principle of additional SRFIs being required is clear and established by the NPS.
- 5.4. Although the NPS does not identify how many SRFIs are required, or on which specific sites they should be provided, it does provide criteria and characteristics which provide a clear outline of the types of locations are considered most suitable. These can be summarised as sites which:
  - *have good connectivity both with the road and rail network, in particular the strategic rail freight network (paragraph 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 (para 2.56);*
  - *proposed new rail freight interchanges should have good road access as this will allow rail to effectively compete with, and work alongside, road freight to achieve a modal shift to rail. Due to these requirements, it may be that countryside locations are required for SRFIs. (paragraph 4.84)*
- 5.5. It is agreed that the proposed location of the Northampton Gateway rail freight interchange is fully consistent with the above criteria:
- 5.6. As described above, the site is adjacent to both the strategic road and rail freight networks.
- 5.7. The logistics and distribution sector in Northamptonshire and beyond the wider South-East Midlands is well-established and this clustering is of national significance. This is reflected in the priorities and growth plans of the Local Enterprise Partnership, and in the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (described in further detail below regarding the sub-regional and local context). This sectoral strength is directly geared around the connectivity of Northampton and the wider sub-region to national transport networks (road and rail), and the ability to access markets across the UK from this area has seen employers and businesses in

the distribution sector locate National Distribution Centres (NDCs) and Regional Distribution Centres (RDCs) in large numbers. The Northampton Gateway site is therefore very well located with regards to being near to the markets – NDCs and RDCs - it will serve.

- 5.8. The NPS cross-refers to, and is consistent with, many parts of the NPPF which is also a material consideration in assessing the Proposed Development. A key thrust of the NPPF is the need to balance the effects of development taking account of economic, social and environmental issues to achieve sustainable development.
- 5.9. The 2018 updated version of the NPPF (at paragraph 104) makes reference to rail freight interchanges, with reference to the need for local planning policies to provide for any such "*large-scale transport facilities that need to be located in the area*", and to have regard to any relevant national policy statements.
- 5.10. The Planning Statement submitted as part of the DCO application provides a more detailed summary of the national policy context for the project, including a detailed overview of the contents of the NPPF and its relevance to the proposals. This provides an assessment which includes a judgement about the 'balance' between the various likely economic, environmental and social impacts of the Proposed Development.

## **6. SUB-REGIONAL CONTEXT**

It is agreed that:

- 6.1. The Northampton Gateway proposal is located within the South East Midlands LEP ('SEMLEP') area. In November 2017 SEMLEP published a revised Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). SEMLEP has historically identified and promoted the Logistics sector as a key component and strength of the sub-regional economy. The SEP is also promoting continued specialisms associated with manufacturing and '*next generation transport*', and in this regard the NG proposals align well with the aspirations and objectives of the SEP.
- 6.2. Key issues identified in the SEP as '*critical*' for the continued success and growth of the Logistics sector include:
  - *Appropriate employment land and transport infrastructure.* (SEP, page 27)
- 6.3. The SEMLEP's vision is to enable the economy to double in size (measured in Gross Value Added) by 2050. This ambition requires and seeks to enable additional job creation, investment, and improved infrastructure in the area, and positions the South-East Midlands as a core part of the wider Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge Growth Corridor. The SEP refers to the South East Midlands area as having a key role in the "*commercialisation of ideas*" into growth in part due to the "*central geographical location and strong logistics networks*" (SEP, page 3).
- 6.4. One of SEMLEP's goals is to increase investment in the South East Midlands, including specifically:
  - *Expansion of existing businesses;*



- Relocation of existing businesses to the area;
- New businesses (domestic or foreign) setting up in the area.

(SEP 2017, page 32)

- 6.5. It is agreed that the Northampton Gateway project is of direct relevance to many of the shared sub-regional aspirations and objectives for economic growth. Through investment to provide additional strategic land and transport infrastructure (new and improvements to existing), the Proposed Development would enable the goal of expansion, relocation, or new businesses investing in the South East Midlands economy. The proposed SRFI would directly support the continued growth and success of a key sector in the local and sub-regional economy, and support aspirations and objectives regarding employment creation, supply-chain development across a range of sectors, and encouraging and enabling trade links and exporting of goods.
- 6.6. The development could provide opportunities for Training and Skills initiatives related to both construction and operational phases of the Northampton Gateway project which would further strengthen the potential local economic benefits.
- 6.7. An additional and potentially critical sub-regional strategic issue relates to the 'Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor' initiative which has been gaining momentum and profile following a report by the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC). The Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford Corridor initiative represents part of the strategic context for Northampton Borough and is expected to form a key input to the next round of Local Plan reviews across the corridor area with potential implications on housing and economic development policies. The emphasis is on the importance of delivering additional infrastructure and housing growth to ensure that the economic potential of the sub-region is not stifled. An integrated strategy to coordinate housing growth and transport infrastructure is now being pursued, and this has direct implications for Northampton and much of Northamptonshire with several of the County's constituent local planning authorities included within the growth corridor.
- 6.8. The Strategy sets what's described as a '*transformational*' vision and agenda for higher levels of growth and development across the corridor, with a focus on the performance and role of the main towns and urban areas. Objectives include not only supporting economic growth across the corridor area, but also improving housing supply and affordability through an increase in housing delivery.
- 6.9. The vision from both the SEMLEP Strategy, and the Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor initiative is explicitly for more jobs, and more investment in both the economy and infrastructure of the area, with improvements to infrastructure to unlock further economic growth. In this regard, the proposed development is broadly consistent with key objectives of these sub-regional strategies.

## **7. LOCAL POLICY, and LIKELY IMPACTS AND BENEFITS**

- 7.1 The following section sets out the key local policy context for Northampton Gateway, and also a summary of how the proposals align with the 'vision' and priorities for the long-term development of the area.

## Core Strategy Context

It is agreed that:

- 7.2 The West Northants Joint Core Strategy (WNJCS) provides the planning policy framework at the local level. The spatial strategy contained in the WNJCS focuses strategic growth locations "in or adjoining" Northampton as the main urban area and centre of economic and population growth.
- 7.3 The strong demand for continued development of distribution and warehousing sector development is understood and recognised by the WNJCS. This is a consequence of the area's central geographic location, proximity to key infrastructure routes, which combines to provide excellent access to a large proportion of the UK population. As a result, the area is well represented by National and Regional Distribution Centres, and the logistics sector accounts for a much higher proportion of employment than that seen at the national level.
- 7.4 It is agreed that Northampton Gateway could make a positive contribution towards the following strategic objectives of the WNJCS:
- Objective 1 – Climate Change which includes "*ensuring new development promotes the use of sustainable travel modes*";
  - Objective 2 - Infrastructure and Development with an emphasis on ensuring "*social, physical and green infrastructure is adequately provided to meet the needs of people and business in a timely and sustainable manner...*";
  - Objective 3 – Connections: "*To reduce the need to travel, shorten travel distances and make sustainable travel a priority across West Northamptonshire by maximising the use of alternative travel modes. In so doing, combat congestion in our main towns and town centres, reduce carbon emissions and address social exclusion for those in both rural and urban areas who do not have access to a private car.*"
  - Objective 8 - Economic Advantage: "*To strengthen and diversify West Northamptonshire's economy by taking advantage of our internationally well-placed location, strategic transport network and proximity to London and Birmingham.*"
- 7.5. However, the site is not allocated, and the Core Strategy (Policy S8) directs all strategic warehousing, including that which doesn't require a rail connection, and demand generated by Northampton's role as the principal urban area, to DIRFT at Junction 18 of the M1.
- 7.6. The Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor referred to above is gaining traction, and is relevant in providing a clear signal that the South East Midlands wants to continue to grow in economic and population terms. The vision is explicitly for more jobs, and more investment in both the economy and infrastructure of the area.
- 7.7 The WNJCS includes a minimum net jobs growth target of 28,500 over the 21 year period between 2008 and 2029. This figure was amended downwards during the WNJCS preparation process from an earlier jobs growth figure of 37,200 over the 20 year period 2001 – 2021 set by the former Regional Spatial Strategy for monitoring purposes. This WNJCS job figure is not intended as a fixed 'cap' or maximum.

7.8. From a strategic perspective, the proposed development would lead to the creation of circa 7,500 new jobs. A review and update to the WNJCS is expected to start in 2018, and if the development proposals are permitted, the review would likely have to make appropriate references to it and consider it as part of the sub-regional and local economy..

7.9 The WNJCS did not allocate land for rail connected strategic distribution land beyond that already approved at DIRFT. 'DIRFT III' was approved in July 2014. The WNJCS refers to no further SRFIs being anticipated at that time (2014). However, with regard to the principle of further SRFIs coming forward the WNJCS states that:

*"The local authorities in West Northamptonshire will continue to work with Network Rail and the freight industry to consider and support further sustainable opportunities for rail freight interchanges in the longer term once the opportunities for additional access onto the rail network to support viable rail freight interchanges are confirmed."*

(WNJCS paragraph 5.72)

7.10 It is agreed that rail capacity and access issues are being covered by a separate Statement of Common Ground between the Applicant and Network Rail, and the Applicant has undertaken its own assessment of rail capacity. .

7.11 Notwithstanding this, one of the Borough Council's key objectives is to ensure that there is sufficient rail capacity to enable additional passenger rail traffic to serve Northampton Station, and to plan for wider strategic growth and connectivity, including growth and connectivity in relation to the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge Corridor and East/ West Rail. It is agreed that increased freight traffic associated with Northampton Gateway should not prejudice or prevent delivery of this longer-term objective, as set out in the submitted Rail Capacity Report.

7.12 The proposed SRFI includes provision for an Aggregates Terminal as part of the intermodal freight terminal and an occupier is committed to relocate from a site in central Northampton and that there has already been strong interest from a locally based aggregates haulier in relocating to the site, if approved. Were this relocation to take place as intended there would be a number of benefits associated with the relocation (and expansion) of the existing rail connected aggregates site adjacent to Northampton Station. In addition to benefits associated with the removal of HGVs and freight trains from this central urban location, it would also create the opportunity for this land to be released for more suitable uses as part of ongoing investment and regeneration in Northampton.

#### **Likely Local Impacts and Benefits**

7.13. It is agreed that:

7.14. The application is supported by an ES, the scope of which was consulted upon in 2016.

7.15. The **Socio-Economic** assessment contained within the Environmental Statement, and the separate 'Market Report' (document 6.8) submitted as part of the DCO application appropriately describes the strategic and local demand for, and opportunities and benefits from, Northampton Gateway. The socio-economic assessment estimates that the proposals would have positive socio-economic impacts, including the anticipated creation of around 7400 new jobs. Supported by proposed improvements to public transport connectivity (a Public Transport

Strategy forms part of the proposals), it is agreed that this will provide job opportunities accessible to communities across the Borough, and beyond.

- 7.16. There are generally high levels of commuting (net in-commuting) into Northampton from surrounding local areas, including South Northamptonshire, and this is widely acknowledged in the evidence base which underpins the WNJCS. However, there is also a net commuting flow out of Northampton in the direction of Milton Keynes. Additional local job creation in and around Northampton could help to reverse this outward trend, creating more sustainable patterns of travel to work, and further enabling Northampton's role as the main urban area and source of growth in the West Northamptonshire area.
- 7.17. The proposals include a range of **transport** improvements, including a substantial improvement to Junction 15 of the M1, and a proposed contribution to help deliver planned improvements at the Queen Eleanor roundabout, widening of the A45 to the north of the M1 junction 15 and the signalisation of the Water Lane Junction.
- 7.18. NBC acknowledge that it is for the relevant Highway Authorities to comment in detail on the proposed mitigation measures, and that both Northamptonshire County Council Highway Authority and Highways England, in their submitted Statements of Common Ground, have confirmed that, subject to the satisfactory securing of the highway mitigation strategy and associated mitigation to be delivered by the Travel Plan and Public Transport Strategy, there would be no significant adverse residual impacts associated with the Development proposals. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that NCC Highway Authority considers that the proposal will alleviate existing/ future capacity issues at a number of junctions.
- 7.19. It is agreed that the highway impacts of the development should be appropriately mitigated in a timely manner. The residual cumulative impacts on both the strategic and local road network, with mitigation in place, are shown by the TA not to be severe
- 7.20. The ES includes an appropriate assessment of the likely **landscape and visual (L&V)** impacts based on the proposed development parameters, including the proposed screen bunding and other landscaping. The bunding heights were revisited (increased) facing Collingtree following comments and queries raised by local people and the Parish Council after the Stage 1 consultation process. The L&V assessment includes explicit consideration of any likely impacts on Collingtree, and shows that during the construction phase there will be some temporary significant effects at a small number of properties on Collingtree Road. While the bunding will be visible, the proposed buildings are largely screened even in the early years, and the effects will be minor/moderate. As the landscaping and planting matures the visual effects of the completed site will reduce further from Collingtree and from the proposed South Northampton SUE. Notwithstanding the physical incompatibility of both schemes (because there is some land included in both sites), professional judgements are that there is limited potential for cumulative visual effects on Collingtree were the Rail Central SRFI also approved. Any potential cumulative visual effects on Collingtree from South Northampton SUE are likely to be limited given the relative location of the two sites.
- 7.21. It is agreed that it will not be possible to entirely eliminate views of the proposed buildings from visual receptors within Northampton Borough, however, the proposed bunding and landscaping will assist in mitigating the visual impacts of the proposed development subject to early

implementation in the development process, and with an appropriate scheme agreed for ongoing future maintenance,

- 7.22 It is agreed that the Applicant has prepared and submitted a Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), with DCO Requirements proposed to require phase or component specific detailed CEMPS to ensure appropriate construction mitigation measures are in place during the course of the development.
- 7.23. The ES includes a **Flood Risk** Assessment and drainage strategy which proposes that surface water is stored in a number of significant drainage ponds and released in a controlled way into the wider drainage network. It is agreed that the flood risk and drainage impacts of the development will be appropriately mitigated, and that this is a matter for the Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authority to comment on in detail.
- 7.24. In respect of air quality, an emission mitigation calculation valued the impact of the SRFI emissions was undertaken as a requirement of the Northampton Low Emission Strategy, this document is being validated by NBC.

## **8.0 CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1 It is agreed that:
- 8.2 The national policy context is explicitly supportive of a network of development of this type and that the Northampton Gateway location meets the site location criteria included in the National Policy Statement with regards to access to strategic road and rail networks, and proximity to markets and key supply chain routes.
- 8.3 The regional, sub-regional and local economic importance of the logistics and distribution sector is clear from the existing evidence base and market signals, and there are strategic ambitions for the South East Midlands sub-region to continue to support and grow the Logistics sector as part of a wider strategy of economic and housing growth. Northampton is the main focus of growth as the main urban area within West Northamptonshire, and the proposed Northampton Gateway would make a direct and significant contribution towards supporting and delivering further sustainable economic growth of one of the area's key sectors.
- 8.4 The town and much of Northamptonshire form part of the Oxford – Milton Keynes – Cambridge corridor, and this is expected to form a driver of planning for additional longer-term housing and economic growth coupled with investment in key strategic infrastructure across Northamptonshire.
- 8.5 The ES has appropriately considered key receptors in Northampton, and shows that likely residual environmental effects, subject to appropriate mitigation as proposed, are acceptable when considered in light of the overall benefits of the proposal and, specifically, the extent to which they will further the objectives of both national and local planning policy.

**SIGNATURES**

On behalf of Northampton Borough Council

Name Cllr James Hill

Signature



On behalf of ~~Oxalis Planning~~, for Roxhill (Kegworth) Ltd

Name MOLLY THOMSON  
LEVISITORS SUTHERLAND

Signature

