

Review of Statement of Common Ground between Warwickshire County Council and Roxhill

Paragraph	Statement of Common Ground	My Response
8	<p>The Reports conclude that there are sufficient freight paths on the West Coast Main Line to accommodate the Northampton Gateway strategic Rail Freight Interchange. Sufficient freight paths are available within the current working timetable and would not therefore affect passenger paths and services.</p>	<p>Network Rail’s relevant representation (1/8/2018) contained the following: <i>“The ability of the RFI to realise its optimal rail service throughput will require detailed capacity studies to be undertaken and, until further capacity studies have been carried out, Network Rail’s position on the DCO application is neutral in this regard”.</i> Roxhill has provided no evidence to indicate that any such studies have been conducted since 1st August 2018.</p> <p>I draw attention to Network Rail’s Northampton Loop Capacity report of September 2017 (included in the Statement of Common Ground between Network Rail and Roxhill) which contained the following in its introduction: <i>“The analysis shows without significant infrastructure improvements a choice must be made between maximising freight paths and creation of additional passenger paths”.</i></p> <p>I draw attention to the Statement of Common Ground between Network Rail and Roxhill. <i>“24. The results of these studies confirm that there is sufficient capacity for the SRFI to operate up to 4 paths per day at the proposed date of commencement of operation of NG. This statement is, however, subject to the following caveats: (a) (b) the origin and destination of each train movement. This information will not be known until the SRFI is operational and therefore whether a path from the SRFI can be matched to a path at the origin/destination”.</i></p> <p>That does not provide confirmation that there is sufficient capacity to provide the freight paths that Northampton Gateway is forecasting being used.</p> <p>I note from the Statement of Common Ground referred to above, that neither</p>

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		<p>Roxhill nor Network Rail have made use of the West Coast Main Line Capacity Plus document. If they had done so, they would have been better informed.</p> <p>Northamptonshire County Council's (NCC) view was as follows: <i>"4.12 However, in their emerging West Coast Capacity Plus Study, Network Rail identified a significant future constraint in capacity between Denbigh Hall North Junction and Milton Keynes Central in particular, but also over the entirety of the Northampton Loop, such that increasing freight services over the Loop might require a reduction in the passenger service to Northampton".</i></p> <p>NCC went on to say: <i>"4.20 However, the applicant has not demonstrated, as far as the County Council can determine, that these paths be used to serve the proposed Rail Freight Interchange without conflict to other services. In particular:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>That there is time available with the headway of appropriate paths for services to slow down to enter or accelerate to depart from the site without delaying following trains.</i> • <i>That it there are paths available which allow northbound ('down') trains to enter and depart the site, without conflicting with paths on the southbound ('up') line which they must cross to access the rail freight terminal".</i> <p>I note also the Northamptonshire Rail Capacity Study produced for the Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership in April 2016 which said: <i>"WEST COAST MAIN LINE - pressure for capacity between Willesden and Northampton will be significant, and is likely to require investment at pinch points. The most significant consequences of this will be a need for investment in additional track capacity between Bletchley and Milton Keynes, and dynamic freight loops on the Northampton Loop. This will be particularly important if enhanced passenger services</i></p>

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		<p><i>between Northampton and London are to be introduced once HS2 Phase 1 opens in 2026".</i> I referred to this report in my written representation paragraphs 163 to 165.</p> <p>Several separate sources have indicated that either further studies need to take place or additional infrastructure work is needed before additional freight paths can be accommodated. So the Roxhill/Warwickshire County Council claim to the contrary appears to be ill founded.</p>

Conclusions

As I suggested at the Open Floor Hearing on 10th October, Warwickshire County Council's involvement appears to be based around its interest in the proposed Rugby Parkway station. It has not carried out the in depth study that Northamptonshire County Council has done and appears to have less knowledge of the local issues surrounding the Northampton Loop line.