

A verbal representation to the Northampton Gateway Open Floor Hearing – 14<sup>th</sup> March 2019

### **Rod Sellers Collingtree Resident and Northampton Gateway Action Group**

You and your fellow Inspectors have heard a lot from visiting Lawyers and technical consultants - so thanks for also listening to the folks who actually live here.

This application is being examined through this process, because it is said to be strategic and in the National Interest and therefore any adverse impacts locally, must be balanced against any national benefit.

Locally, the downsides seem many:

- We know that Northampton Borough Council has just confirmed that the AQ modelling for the project shows that some areas of the town, including some AQMA's, will exceed legal limits well into the 2020's. They confirm that current monitoring shows - in some cases - levels 25% above legal limits.
- NBC also state in the new Low Emissions Strategy up to 2025, that as regards the M1 AQMA, next to the site, they will be working with Highways England to reduce the impact of emissions on affected communities. They don't say how this might be done but it acknowledges that there is already a problem.
- We don't need to be a traffic experts to know that the road network around Junction 15 is already close to breaking point and we cannot understand how a further 16,000 vehicle trips (4,000 of them diesel HGV's) can help either congestion or air quality.
- We also know that as the scheme is currently designed there will be direct access to and from the site from Collingtree High Street which is a Conservation Area. This gives the potential for 6,000 employees to make a short walk or cycle ride into the site and the incentive to drop off or park within the village.
- There is a long list of other environmental impacts and they have been discussed at length at these hearings. It is obvious that you can't just drop a major 24 hour/ Industrial complex covering 500 acres into the Northamptonshire countryside without causing widespread disruption. Indeed, Northants County Council has just voted to oppose both this scheme and the adjoining Rail Central scheme.

Despite all this , it is argued that the project is in the National Interest and that its strategic benefits will outweigh any local disruption.

Whether or not this is justifiable is for you to determine, but locally we are very sceptical.

You will know that last month, the Editor of the Industry Journal, the 'Rail Magazine' questioned the logic of there now being four competing SFRI schemes all within 50 miles of each other. He went on to say:

*"I suspect I am not alone in finding it rather unsavoury that four almost identical schemes, located in close proximity are proposed by different developers, and all designed to fall outside the remit of a local authority. Objections to these plans by local residents won't count for much and are likely to be overridden by the 'strategic' nature of the schemes which will be viewed to be in the 'national interest'.*

More importantly he goes on:

*It is likely that in a few years these terminals will end up being road served because they are cheaper, convenient and more flexible"*

And that is also our view - that this is essentially a warehouse project and in planning terms should be judged as such.