



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

National Infrastructure
The Planning Inspectorate
By email: NorthamptonGateway@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

20 September 2022

Ref: LD/AL35023

Dear Sirs,

I write in my capacity as Member of Parliament for South Northamptonshire and in response to the consultation for what has been called the Non-Material Change Northampton Gateway Rail Freight Interchange Project.

Gravely concerned constituents have been contacting me over the past several weeks and months as news of the possible proposed change to the DCO was communicated to the local community. They are, rightly, afraid of the impact that any so called 'non-material change' to the DCO will have on the local area.

The original DCO 2019 No. 1358 requirement stated that *"A rail terminal capable of handling at least four intermodal trains per day, including 775 metre length trains, must be constructed and available for use prior to the occupation of any of the warehousing."* The requirement for the rail terminal to be constructed and available for use was a specific condition to the consent for the development which was agreed to by SEGRO. The approval explicitly prohibited any commercial activity until the rail connection was operational.

At the time of the planning application for the SRFI, I met with Network Rail in Parliament to ask directly whether a rail link would be forthcoming. At the time I was told that they doubted any link could be provided before HS2 was fully up and running, thereby freeing the WCML for some more freight traffic. I then wrote to Network Rail and received a reply, which (in less explicit terms) confirms that they did not, at any time, agree to a rail link. I made this clear to the Planning Inspector at the time, but was assured that all would be well. My constituents and I are furious to see this cynical proposal for a fundamental change to the entire project being put forward as a 'non material' issue. My constituents and I profoundly disagree that this should be defined as non material, and urge you to require the developer to adhere to the original instruction as per the original DCO.

I enclose a copy of the exchange of letters between Network Rail and myself, for your perusal.

I have set out the specific concerns raised by my constituents in relation to SEGRO's requested changes below:

Definition of 'non-material' change: many constituents have stated that the proposed changes constitute 'material' changes. Blisworth Parish Council in particular are extremely concerned that the new proposal would allow a large percentage of the warehousing being developed to start being used ahead of completion of the rail line.

Impact on road traffic: if the proposed changes go ahead, the site would become dependent on HGVs for goods transport, making it likely that the use of a rail terminal would become a lower priority or even obsolete. This would significantly increase the already high traffic volume on the M1 and A5 and have a detrimental impact on the local road network. In addition, it would mean that the entire basis of the Planning Inspector's approval - that this was a 'strategically important' rail

Member of Parliament for South Northamptonshire

freight interchange, would be totally undermined.

Increase in noise and pollution: with an increase in HGV traffic comes an increase in noise and pollution. This would have a severe impact on both the local environment and local communities such as Blisworth, Roade, Milton Malsor and the surrounding villages and towns, which already suffer with high levels of HGV traffic disruption, noise and air pollution, particularly when the strategic road network is congested and traffic is diverted from the M1 through the villages.

Traffic surveys: many constituents have raised their concerns that traffic surveys from 2019 are out of date and now incorrect as it was assumed there would be a rail head terminal. They are requesting that new surveys take place.

Impact of ongoing groundworks: this has already had a serious impact on degradation to the environment, with many trees and greenery cleared to make way for this development.

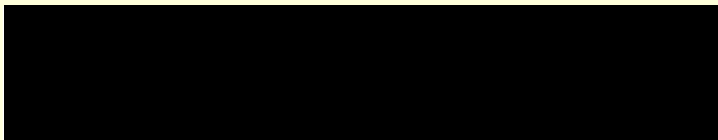
Cumulative impact of development projects: our local area finds itself at risk of overdevelopment, traffic problems, air quality and noise pollution with major infrastructure projects like HS2, the Towcester Relief Road and improvements to the A5 all happening at once. The cumulative impact of any additional road traffic due to a change in this DCO has not been considered.

It is clear that if the change is granted, a devastating precedent will be set, making it highly likely that other rail terminal projects could apply for similar changes, and that future development proposals will be put forward safe in the knowledge that if the rail link proves tricky, the valuable income from logistics and warehousing will likely be secured through a similar change to a DCO. It will encourage further overdevelopment in areas that find themselves at risk from unsuitable warehousing projects.

My constituents believe that approving this change is contrary to government policy under which the DCO was issued, and rightly fear that if this is granted, the original purpose of the interchange - to service and transport goods by rail will never happen.

I will be placing a copy of this communication on my website and social media profiles and look forward to your confirmation of receipt.

With best wishes



The Rt Hon. Dame Andrea Leadsom DBE MP
Member of Parliament for South Northamptonshire

Encl.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Martin Frobisher
Route Managing Director
Network Rail
1 Eversholt Street
London
NW1 2DN

27th March 2017

Ref: AL/TG/1703

Re: Rail Central & Northampton Gateway SRFIs

Dear Mr Frobisher,

When we met at the end of last year, you mentioned that Network Rail thought that there might not be enough track paths for additional freight movements on the West Coast Main Line prior to the timetabled opening of HS2 Phase One in 2026, and that this would obviously be a consideration for you in your comments as a statutory consultee on any proposed SRFI in our local area. Is this still the case? I understand from the developers that they are under the impression that there is currently freight capacity to support the development of either Northampton Gateway or Rail Central, and this has been supported by analysis provided by their independent rail consultants.

Additionally, I am told by the local action group that Network Rail had previously mentioned to them that you would be undertaking a capacity study on the above yourselves. Is this an all-encompassing study across your entire network or locally-specific to this stretch of the WCML? I should be grateful if you could let me know what stage you are at with this, if it is proceeding, and when you expect to be able to publish the results.

Finally, the local action group has said that they understand both developers (Ashfield Land and Roxhill) have only recently submitted their Client Requirements Document, but are also being told that one or both developers have progressed to GRIP Stage 2 – Feasibility. Could you clarify this for me?

With best wishes,

The Rt Hon. Andrea Leadsom MP
Member of Parliament for South Northamptonshire

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12 April 2017

Dear Ms Leadsom,

Re: Rail Central & Northampton Gateway SRFIs

Thank you for your further letter.

I appreciate these two proposals are generating significant interest in your constituency and I want to be transparent about our involvement in this work.

There are number of potential developments, including Rail Central and Northampton Gateway, who want to connect to the 'Northampton loop' on the West Coast Main line (WCML). Our view is that not every proposal can safely connect to this stretch of the railway due to high levels of existing traffic. To explain this further, the WCML is the busiest mixed-use railway in Europe, which means there is limited space for new train services.

Thanks to the hard work of my maintenance teams, it is currently performing very well. Any significant increase in trains could affect the punctuality of services and lead to additional running costs.

However as a business, we want the railway to play its part in helping stimulate economic growth. This means that where it is practicably possible, we work with the private sector to resolve engineering and capacity issues.

To date, we have not received any information from the developers to suggest there is spare freight capacity on the Northampton loop. We are currently determining whether this is the case by carrying out a study along this section. This work is being funded by the two developers and the other interested parties.

As the study is a commercial agreement between us and the developers, it is legally and commercially sensitive. Therefore, we are unable to share this information with you at present. But its findings will be used to inform our response to any Development Control Order and will be publically available at that time.

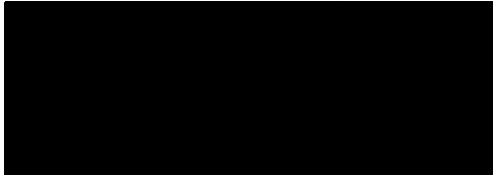
In terms of our current discussions with the developers, we are reviewing their draft 'Client Requirement Documents'. The next step is to agree commercial terms to fund GRIP 1-2 feasibility studies for each scheme. Therefore, neither project has formally started the GRIP process.



Finally, your opinion of our work matters to me, which is why I want to keep you regularly updated. I have asked my Public Affairs Manager to make contact with your office to set up a new meeting date.

I hope this response is helpful and if you need more information please do get in touch.

Yours sincerely,



Martin Frobisher
Route Managing Director
London and North Western route