

From:

To:

Subject:

Keith 23/09/2022: 2019 No. 1358 INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING The Northampton Gateway Rail Freight Interchange Order 2019

Date:

23 September 2022 13:22:53

Considering Dame Angela Leadsom's very impactful letter – see below - that I recently received regarding Segro Northampton Gateway application for a DCO amendment. I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed amendment requested by SEGRO to the original Development Consent Order (DCO) granted in October 2019 for the Northampton Gateway.

The SEGRO proposal is clearly in breach of the National Policy Statement for National Networks, the national Strategic Rail Freight Interchange policy and the DCO granted for the Northampton Gateway. The DCO prohibited any commercial activity until the rail connection was operational: 'a rail terminal capable of handling at least four intermodal trains per day ... must be constructed and available for use prior to the occupation of any of the warehousing'.

This amendment would allow up to 80% of the site to become operational in advance of any rail connection, and therefore road serviced only, opening the door to the site operating in perpetuity without any rail connection.

It is clearly a material amendment: the ensuing increase in traffic/noise and pollution would have a severe impact on both the local environment and local communities such as Blisworth which already suffers with high levels of HGV traffic, particularly when the strategic road network is congested.

I believe that SEGRO is seeking to shift from a speculative build to a contract build operation and is seeking this change entirely for their own financial benefit. They have been actively marketing these units from the start of this year, with proposed occupation from Q4 2022 which is misleading and at odds with the original DCO. SEGRO were fully aware of the constraints to the build when they took on the project.

I am strongly seeking your strong support to oppose this amendment and ensure that the original DCO is complied with in full. If SEGRO is allowed this amendment this would open the floodgates to other developers to adopt the same approach: ignoring original commitments, bypassing local planning and flagrantly breaching national government policy.

I live in the Village of Ashton and have already seen 18-wheel HGV's coming through the Village and there is not the infrastructure to handle these vehicles that are causing damage to already ill repaired and prepared roads and bridges. The junction from Stoke Road to the A508 is also seeing a large increase in HGV's North and South.

Thank you

Keith R Whitburn



THE RT HON. ANDREA LEADSOM MP



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

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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.