

Northampton Gateway SRFI Proposed DCO amendments – SEGRO

A development Consent Order was granted to Northampton Gateway on October 2019. The planning application had been processed through the Planning Inspectorate rather than the local planning authority as the scheme was proposed to be a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI). The principles are set out in the National Policy Statement for National Networks. The policy below makes it extremely clear that an SRFI should be rail connected from day **one**.

*4.88 Applications for a proposed SRFI should provide for a number of rail connected or rail accessible buildings for initial take up, plus rail infrastructure to allow more extensive rail connection within the site in the longer term. The initial stages of the development must provide an **operational rail network connection** and areas for intermodal handling and container storage. It is not essential for all buildings on the site to be rail connected from the outset, but a significant element should be.*

The Development Consent Order (DCO) issued for Northampton Gateway contained the following statement:

Components of development and phasing, 3 (3) on page 44

*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 above is a specific requirement for Northampton Gateway, as issued by the Planning Inspectorate, for the rail connection to be available before any warehouse can be occupied.

The consequences of approving the requested amendment are that logistics companies would operate as entirely road-based operations at Northampton Gateway. They would become established in that mode of operation for a year or possibly longer, and there would be no incentive for them to switch to using the rail connection at a later point. The site could well become a purely road-based logistics hub, with the SRFI tag used to circumnavigate all local planning. If that were to happen, the original DCO would become invalid as it would have been granted on a basis which was not delivered.

Departing from a basic condition of the DCO can only be described as Material. Such a change would have a long-term impact on traffic, noise generation and air quality (adjacent to an existing AQMA) all of which should require a revised Environmental Impact Assessment.

I maintain my strongly held view that the amendment to the DCO requested by Segro in respect of Northampton Gateway should be refused.

John Exley