

Tritax Symmetry (Hinckley) Limited

HINCKLEY NATIONAL RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE

The Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange Development Consent Order

Project reference TR050007

Environmental Statement Volume 1: Main Statement

Chapter 1: Introduction

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Planning Act 2008

The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009
Regulation 5(2)(a)

The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017
Regulation 14

This document forms a part of the Environmental Statement for the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange project.

Tritax Symmetry (Hinckley) Limited (TSH) has applied to the Secretary of State for Transport for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange (HNRFI).

To help inform the determination of the DCO application, TSH has undertaken an environmental impact assessment (EIA) of its proposals. EIA is a process that aims to improve the environmental design of a development proposal, and to provide the decision maker with sufficient information about the environmental effects of the project to make a decision.

The findings of an EIA are described in a written report known as an Environmental Statement (ES). An ES provides environmental information about the scheme, including a description of the development, its predicted environmental effects and the measures proposed to ameliorate any adverse effects.

Further details about the proposed Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange are available on the project website:



The DCO application and documents relating to the examination of the proposed development can be viewed on the Planning Inspectorate’s National Infrastructure Planning website:

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/east-midlands/hinckley-national-rail-freight-interchange/>

Chapter 1 ◆ Introduction

OVERVIEW

- 1.1. This document is the Environmental Statement (ES) for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange ('SRFI'), known as the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange ('the HNRFI', or 'the Proposed Development'). The ES has been prepared by technical consultants identified later in this chapter on behalf of Tritax Symmetry (Hinckley) Limited ('TSH' or 'the Applicant').
- 1.2. A SRFI is a multi-purpose freight interchange and distribution centre linked to both the national rail and road networks. SRFIs reduce the cost of moving freight and encourage the transfer of freight from road to rail.
- 1.3. The Main HNRFI Site lies 3 km to the north-east of Hinckley, in a broadly level area of mixed farmland to the north-west of Junction 2 of the M69. The railway between Leicester and Hinckley on the north-western boundary of the site is on Network Rail's strategic freight network, linking the west coast and east coast main lines and forming a primary link between Felixstowe and the Midlands and North. Network Rail has already undertaken substantial capacity enhancements under its Felixstowe to Nuneaton freight capacity scheme (F2N).
- 1.4. The 'DCO Order Limits', which define the area in which the proposed SRFI and related road and rail infrastructure development would take place, are shown in figure 1.1 (document reference 6.3.1.1). The DCO Works Plans (document reference 2.15.1 – 2.15.9), submitted as part of the DCO application, show the Order Limits in more detail.
- 1.5. The DCO Order Limits include the land between the Leicester to Hinckley railway and the M69 motorway to the south of Elmesthorpe, where the proposed SRFI would be located. This area is referred to as the 'Main HNRFI Site' and is shown on figure 2.1 (document reference 6.3.2.1). The DCO Order Limits also include contiguous extensions to the north-west, south and east of the Main HNRFI Site, respectively to contain the corridor of a proposed A47 Link Road, proposed works to M69 Junction 2 and a section of the B4669 Hinckley Road towards the village of Sapcote for which traffic management measures are proposed.
- 1.6. The DCO Order Limits also include additional non-contiguous areas of land at roads and junctions for which highway enhancements and traffic management measures are proposed. They also include some pedestrian level crossings on the Leicester to Hinckley railway that are subject to proposed works and restrictions.

PROJECT STATUS

- 1.7. The Planning Act 2008 introduced a new consenting regime for a prescribed list of

nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs), under which infrastructure developers apply for a Development Consent Order (DCO) from the relevant Secretary of State, having first undertaken an extensive programme of consultation, environmental impact assessment (where required) and design refinement at the pre-application stage. The HNRFI proposals qualify as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) as they comprise a rail freight interchange as described in section 26 of the Planning Act 2008. Following a process of examination undertaken by the Planning Inspectorate, the application is passed to the Secretary of State for determination. Decisions are guided by a series of National Policy Statements (NPSs), approved in Parliament.

- 1.8. The general purpose of the Proposed Development is explained in paragraph 2.44 of the Department for Transport's *National Policy Statement for National Networks* (NPS, December 2014, page 20):

'The aim of a strategic rail freight interchange (SRFI) is to optimise the use of rail in the freight journey by maximising rail trunk haul and minimising some elements of the secondary distribution leg by road, through co-location of other distribution and freight activities. SRFIs are a key element in reducing the cost to users of moving freight by rail and are important in facilitating the transfer of freight from road to rail, thereby reducing trip mileage of freight movements on both the national and local road networks'.

- 1.9. The essential components of a SRFI development include direct rail connections to ports at which freight is imported and exported, and high quality strategic rail and road connections to the region or regions that the interchange will serve. An SRFI also requires a substantial area of broadly level and free-draining land for storage and logistics buildings and associated road haulage yards.
- 1.10. These requirements are all met by the proposed site for the HNRFI.
- 1.11. The HNRFI includes the following main elements, further detail is provided in chapter 3, *Proposed development* (document reference 6.1.3).

The 'Main HNRFI Site'

Railport

- Railway sidings and a freight transfer area known as a 'Railport' are proposed alongside the existing two-track railway between Leicester and Hinckley, which is on Network Rail's strategic rail freight route between Felixstowe and Nuneaton. For this reason and more generally because of its central location between the west coast and east coast main lines, the HNRFI would enjoy good rail connections with the sea ports of Felixstowe, London Gateway and Liverpool, and is also well-placed in the national rail network to provide direct links to and from major cargo terminals at Southampton and the Humber estuary.

Warehousing

- Two plateaux will be formed bound by the Railport to the north-west and the M69

motorway to the south-east, for the development of high-bay use class B8 (warehouse or distribution) buildings. These B8 buildings will have a total area of up to 850,000 square metres gross internal area (GIA), comprising up to 650,000 square metres at ground level and up to 200,000 square metres of internal mezzanine floorspace). These buildings will be up to a maximum of 28 metres in height above ground level although it is not envisaged that entire buildings will be this high. The proposed maximum building height would allow the scheme to accommodate modern automation systems and occupiers requiring high bay racking.

Highway works

M69 Junction 2

- A new road access to the HNRFI would be added to the existing roundabout at Junction 2 of the M69. The M69 motorway connects the M6 near Coventry to the M1 near Leicester and has links to the A5 in between. As a part of the proposals, a northbound off-slip and a southbound on-slip would be added to Junction 2 of the M69, which currently caters only for M69 motorway traffic heading to and from the north.

A47 Link Road

- A link road, the A47 Link Road, will be built from Junction 2 of the M69 to the B4668/A47 Leicester Road, including the demolition of an existing railway bridge and construction of a replacement bridge to provide a new highway. Access to the B8 buildings and Railport on the Main HNRFI Site will be taken from the A47 Link Road. That part of the A47 Link Road that lies between the existing roundabout at Junction 2 of the M69 and the railway lies within the Main HNRFI Site.

Minor enhancement works

- Minor enhancement works at ten other junctions in the locality, as identified in Chapter 3: *Project description* and Chapter 8: *Transport and traffic* of this ES.

Other works

- Landscape and planting works, ecological and noise mitigation, drainage, a heavy goods vehicle parking area with driver welfare facilities and a HGV fuel station, an energy centre, a building providing offices and a marketing suite, and footpath, cycleway and bridleway routes and connections.
- Works and closures to a series of local pedestrian level crossings on the Leicester to Hinckley railway.
- Off-site highway improvements including a new road link referred to as the A47 Link Road as described above, and minor junction improvements elsewhere.
- Closure of a section of Burbage Common Road as well as the diversion of some existing public rights of way.

- 1.12. The Main HNRFI Site lies wholly within Blaby District in Leicestershire. The M69 motorway works are also located in Blaby District. The A47 Link Road extends into Hinckley and Bosworth Borough. The proposed off-site highway enhancement works are in Blaby District, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough, Rugby Borough and Harborough District.

THE APPLICANT

- 1.13. Tritax Symmetry Limited was formed following the acquisition of DB Symmetry, who originally proposed the development, by Tritax Big Box REIT plc, a FTSE 250 company, in February 2019. Tritax Big Box REIT plc is a real estate investment trust (REIT) dedicated to investing in and funding the pre-let development of very large logistics facilities in the UK.
- 1.14. Tritax Symmetry Limited has a land portfolio of 1,680 hectares (ha) 4,150 acres), capable of accommodating 3.7 million sq. metres (40 million sq. ft) of logistics space. The portfolio is concentrated around the main motorway arteries of the UK and primarily along the M1 and M40 motorways in the Midlands and in the north-west's M6 and M62 motorway corridors.
- 1.15. TSH is a TSL group company and was established for the purpose of promoting the HNRFI.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND THE 'ROCHDALE ENVELOPE'

- 1.16. To help inform the determination of the DCO application, the Applicant has undertaken an environmental impact assessment (EIA) of its proposals. EIA is a process that aims to improve the environmental design of a development proposal and provide decision-makers with sufficient information about the likely significant environmental effects of implementing a project. For projects requiring development consent under the Planning Act 2008 and for which EIA is required, the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 ('the EIA Regulations 2017') are applicable. These regulations set out the procedural requirements for undertaking an EIA.
- 1.17. The findings of the EIA are described in a written report known as an Environmental Statement (ES). The ES provides environmental information about the scheme, including a description of the development and an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the construction and operation of the Proposed Development. In the current context the EIA process has iteratively informed the design development of the HNRFI Project, and this ES sets out proposed mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or remediate potential adverse effects on the environment.
- 1.18. This ES is part of a suite of documents that accompanies the HNRFI DCO application. It has been produced in compliance with the EIA Regulations 2017. A full description of the DCO application documents is provided in the Applicant's *Guide to the Application* (document reference 1.4) submitted with the DCO application.

- 1.19. For practical reasons, TSH wishes to maintain flexibility about the detailed design of certain elements of the Proposed Development. At the same time TSH acknowledges the essential need to provide sufficient information about the project to ensure that the assessment clearly assesses the worst case scenario and, in order to identify any likely significant effects and report on these in the ES. As such, the ES has been undertaken in accordance with what are known as ‘Rochdale Envelope’¹ principles.
- 1.20. These principles allow a certain degree of flexibility in DCO applications and are explained in Planning Inspectorate Advice Note Nine: *Using the ‘Rochdale Envelope’*. Rochdale envelope principles are explained at the beginning of Chapter 3: *Project Description*, of this ES (document reference 6.1.3). In summary there are parts of the Proposed Development for which flexibility is sought in the DCO application, and for which the EIA has employed Rochdale parameters. The DCO application will fix the outer envelope or ‘parameters’ of the Proposed Development including its position, land uses and the overall maximum dimensions of built features such as buildings, roads and landscape areas. If the DCO is made, the Applicant will be required to submit details of individual buildings and development phases to Blaby District Council for approval prior to construction of those elements. These design details would be within the assessed and approved parameters. Other elements of the HNRFI project may also need the approval of the planning or highway authority for the area in which they are located.
- 1.21. The flexibility implicit in the Rochdale Envelope approach is essential for the HNRFI Project for the following reasons.
- The needs of the freight logistics industry are rapidly evolving and the sector is in the midst of a technical revolution. Given the envisaged timeframe for the full delivery of the HNRFI, it is essential that the DCO affords sufficient flexibility to accommodate developments in rail and road transport, freight handling and storage, construction methods, energy supply, employees’ transport arrangements, etc.
 - There is a need to cater for the requirements of individual logistics occupiers – particularly with respect to the dimensions of individual buildings and freight handling areas.

THE EIA

The need for EIA

- 1.22. EIA for NSIP developments is undertaken in accordance with the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (‘the EIA Regulations’). Regulation

¹ *The Rochdale Envelope approach originated in two court decisions in 1999 and 2000, in which it was established that a planning application for a development requiring EIA could be made in outline provided that sufficient design detail was provided to inform a reliable assessment of environmental effects in accordance with the EIA Regulations. The court decisions concerned a planning application for a business park in Rochdale.*

6 determines development to be 'EIA development' if any of the following circumstances apply:

- the applicant notifies the Secretary of State in writing under regulation 8(1)(b) that it proposes to provide an ES in respect of proposed development; or
- the Secretary of State or an Examining Authority adopts a screening opinion to the effect that the development is EIA development; or
- the Secretary of State directs an accepted application to be EIA development.

1.23. Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations identifies the types of development that might require ES if likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as their nature, size or location. The Proposed Development is included in the following parts of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations:

- Part 10(a) 'Industrial estate development projects';
- Part 10(c) 'construction of intermodal transshipment facilities and of intermodal terminals';
- Part 10(d) 'construction of railways'; and
- Part 10(f) 'construction of roads'.

1.24. Following consideration of the characteristics of development, the location of development and the types and characteristics of potential impacts, the Applicant concluded that its proposals are EIA development and volunteered to provide an ES to accompany the application for a DCO by notifying the Secretary of State. This approach was confirmed in the Scoping Opinion received from the Inspectorate (document reference 6.2.6.2) where the Inspectorate stated:

'The Applicant notified the SoS under Regulation 8(1)(b) of the EIA Regulations that they propose to provide an Environmental Statement (ES) in respect of the Proposed Development on 12 March 2018. Therefore in accordance with Regulation 6(2)(a) of the EIA Regulations, the Proposed Development is EIA Development.'

The scope of the EIA

1.25. On 14 March 2018 the Applicant requested an EIA scoping opinion from the Secretary of State for Transport under Regulation 10 of the EIA Regulations. A scoping opinion request seeks the decision maker's written confirmation of the scope of the EIA. The request was accompanied by the Applicant's ES scoping report entitled '*Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange: application for an EIA scoping opinion*'. This report set out the Applicant's considered views on likely significant environmental effects and the scope of information the Applicant considered was appropriate to assess the environmental effects of the scheme. On 24 April 2018 the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) on behalf of the Secretary of State issued the Secretary of State's response, entitled *Scoping Opinion - Proposed*

Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange 2018.

- 1.26. Subsequent assessment of the effects by the Applicant of the Proposed Development on road traffic indicated that the scope of the ES needed to be extended. In particular, transport modelling suggested that the proposed upgrade of Junction 2 of the M69 would change patterns of existing non-HNRFI-related road traffic in the locality, creating new routes on the local road network with consequential environmental effects. In response the Applicant submitted an updated EIA scoping request on 12 November 2020 (document reference 6.2.6.1). A new EIA scoping opinion was adopted by the Secretary of State on 22 December 2020 (the 2020 Scoping Opinion) (document reference 6.2.6.2).
- 1.27. In line with the EIA Regulations, the ES has been prepared in accordance with the 2020 Scoping Opinion (document reference 6.2.6.2), the most recent Scoping Opinion received for the HNRFI, the response to the Planning Inspectorate's comments and those from prescribed consultees is provided in the introductory sections of each of the environmental topic-based chapters of this ES.

CONSULTATION

- 1.28. Pre-application consultation is a legal requirement for DCO applications. It allows issues and concerns to be raised and considered when a proposed development is still at a formative stage and, where appropriate, assists an applicant in addressing adverse environmental effects through avoidance, design or mitigation before the DCO application is submitted for examination by PINS.
- 1.29. The Applicant undertook an informal public consultation in autumn 2018. Consultation feedback highlighted concern about the effects of the proposed development on local road traffic, particularly as a result of the proposed upgrade of Junction 2 of the M69, which would redistribute existing traffic flows on the local road network. In response, the Applicant carried out a further informal consultation in summer 2019 on off-site highway improvements.
- 1.30. In January 2022 the Applicant commenced a statutory consultation on the DCO application, including the HNRFI, upgrades to Junction 2 of the M69 and other off-site highway improvements.
- 1.31. Pre-application consultations undertaken for the HNRFI are described further in a *Consultation Report* (document reference 5.1) that accompanies the DCO application. The Consultation Report records extensive engagement with the government agencies, local authorities and other interested parties on the environmental effects of the Proposed Development, that has taken place between 2018 up to the point of submission of the DCO. It explains how TSH have responded to specific consultation responses in the preparation of the current DCO application. A further account of how the Proposed Development responds to pre-application consultation feedback is provided in the introductory sections of each of the environmental topic-based chapters of this ES.

THE PROJECT TEAM

1.32. According to Regulation 14(4)(a) of the EIA Regulations 2017:

(4) In order to ensure the completeness and quality of the environmental statement—

- (a) the applicant must ensure that the environmental statement is prepared by competent experts; and*
- (b) the environmental statement must be accompanied by a statement from the applicant outlining the relevant expertise or qualifications of such experts*

1.33. The EIA was undertaken by competent experts with the relevant and appropriate experience in their respective topics. TSH's EIA team for the HNRFI project comprises the specialist consultants identified in Table 1.1. In accordance with the requirement of the Regulations to demonstrate competency, the professional particulars of the specialists responsible for the EIA are identified in Table 1.1 at the end of this chapter.

REPORT STRUCTURE

1.34. This ES is structured as follows.

- **Chapter 2** (document reference 6.1.2) describes the proposed site of the HNRFI, including its location in the East Midlands, the site and its surroundings.
- **Chapter 3** (document reference 6.1.3) provides a description of the Proposed Development. It begins with an explanation of the purpose of SRFIs and then describes the proposed rail and road connections, the logistics park and arrangements for landscape, planting and public rights of way. The chapter concludes with a description of how the HNRFI would operate, once built.
- **Chapter 4** (document reference 6.1.4) explains the considerations that informed the selection of the proposed site for the HNRFI, and outlines other options that were considered, including 'do nothing', alternative sites and alternative designs.
- **Chapter 5** (document reference 6.1.5) summarises the legal and regulatory provisions and the national and local planning policy relevant to the assessment of the project's environmental effects.
- **Chapter 6** (document reference 6.1.6) outlines the agreed scope of the EIA and the general methodology, including the approach to the assessment of cumulative, in-combination and transboundary effects.
- **Chapters 7 to 19** describe the assessment of individual environmental topics, including baseline environmental conditions, likely significant environmental effects and the

measures being proposed to avoid, minimise or mitigate any adverse effects. These chapters and their document reference numbers are as follows.

7. *Land use and socio-economic effects* (document reference 6.1.7)
 8. *Transport and traffic* (document reference 6.1.8)
 9. *Air quality* (document reference 6.1.9)
 10. *Noise and vibration* (document reference 6.1.10)
 11. *Landscape and visual effects* (document reference 6.1.11)
 12. *Ecology and biodiversity* (document reference 6.1.12)
 13. *Cultural heritage* (document reference 6.1.13)
 14. *Hydrogeology* (document reference 6.1.14)
 15. *Surface water and flood risk* (document reference 6.1.15)
 16. *Geology, soils and contaminated land* (document reference 6.1.16)
 17. *Materials and waste* (document reference 6.1.17)
 18. *Energy and climate change* (document reference 6.1.18)
 19. *Major accidents and disasters* (document reference 6.1.19)
- **Chapter 20** (document reference 6.1.20) describes the assessment of cumulative, in-combination and transboundary environmental effects for the project as a whole.
 - **Chapter 21** (document reference 6.1.21) presents the conclusion to the EIA and sets out the mitigation commitments.
- 1.35. A **Non-technical summary of the ES** (document reference 6.4) is also available. This is intended to be accessible by a range of audiences, providing them with a clear outline of the HNRFI, the likely significant environmental effects and subsequent mitigation strategies to avoid or lessen the potential adverse impacts.
- 1.36. Full lists of figures, tables and appendices are provided in the frontispiece to this ES (document reference 6.1.0), along with a glossary of technical terms.

Table 1.1: The applicant's EIA team for the HNRFI project

Responsibility	Lead assessor	Professional qualifications
1 – 4 and 6 (Introduction, Site description, Project description, Project development and alternatives and assessment methodology)		
Savills	Erin Banks	MEnvSci (Hons), MIEMA, CEnv
Savills	Tom McClure	BSc (Hons), MSc, MIEMA, CEnv
Savills	Dan Smyth	BSc (Jt Hons), MSc, DIC
5. Relevant law and policy		
Frampton Town	Peter Frampton	BSc (Hons), TP, MRICS, MRTPI

Responsibility	Lead assessor	Professional qualifications
Planning		
Savills	Erin Banks	MEnvSci (Hons), MIEMA, CEnv
7. Land use and socio-economic effects		
Savills	Stefanos Zymis	Dip, MSc, MIED
Savills	Georgina Sheard	MSc BA
Savills	Gabriel Baudard	MSc BCom
8. Transport and traffic		
BWB	Malcolm Ash	BEng(Hons) MCHIT CMILT
BWB	Shirley Dumigan	BSc FCIHT MTPS
9. Air Quality		
BWB	Freya Hoyle	MSc BSc MIAQM MIEnvSc
BWB	Claire Meddings	MSc BSc (Hons) CSci MIAQM MIEnvSc
10. Noise and vibration		
BWB	Mike Barratt	BSc (Hons), PGDip, MIOA
BWB	Lucy Elmer	BA (Hons) MSc MIOA
11. Landscape and visual effects		
EDP	Fiona McKenzie	MA (Cantab) Geography, MA Landscape Design, CMLI, MArborA, AIEMA
EDP	Owain Keeley	BSc (Hons), MSc, CMLI
12. Ecology and biodiversity		
EDP	Fiona McKenzie	MA (Cantab) Geography, MA Landscape Design, CMLI, MArborA, AIEMA
EDP	Will Lishman	BSc (Hons), MCIEEM
13. Cultural Heritage		

Responsibility	Lead assessor	Professional qualifications
EDP	Fiona McKenzie	MA (Cantab) Geography, MA Landscape Design, CMLI, MArborA, AIEMA
EDP	Eddy Stratford	BA (Hons), MCifA
14. Surface water and flood risk		
BWB	Robin Green	BSc (Hons)
BWB	Chris Dodd	BEng (Hons) IEng, MICE
BWB	Claire Gardener	BSc(Hons) MSc MCIWEM C.WEM
15. Hydrogeology		
BWB	Richard Robinson	BSc (Hons) MCIWEM
BWB	Tim Hull	BSc MSc CGeol FGS SiLC SQP QP
16. Geology, soils and contamination		
BWB	Richard Robinson	BSc (Hons) MCIWEM
BWB	Tim Hull	BSc MSc CGeol FGS SiLC SQP QP
17. Materials and waste		
Capita Real Estate and Infrastructure	Ben Withers	BA (Joint Hons), MRes, MCIWM
Capita Real Estate and Infrastructure	Emma Copley	BSc (Hons), AssocMCIWM
18. Energy and climate change		
BWB	Matt Wilby	PIEMA, MSc, BSc (Hons)
19. Accidents and disasters		
Savills	Tom McClure	BSc (Hons), MSc, MIEMA, CEnv
Savills	Erin Banks	MEnvSci (Hons), MIEMA, CEnv
20. Cumulative and in-combination effects		
Savills	Rhys Williams	BSc (Hons), MSc, PIEMA, REnvP

Responsibility	Lead assessor	Professional qualifications
Savills	Erin Banks	MEnvSci (Hons), MIEMA, CEnv
<i>21. Conclusion and mitigation commitments</i>		
Savills	Erin Banks	MEnvSci (Hons), MIEMA, CEnv
Savills	Rhys Williams	BSc (Hons), MSc, PIEMA, REnvP
Savills	Dan Smyth	BSc (Jt Hons), MSc, DIC