



Preliminary Meeting Note

Application:	Hinckley Nation Rail Freight Terminal
Reference:	TR050007
Time and date:	10:00 on 12 September 2023
Venue:	Leicester Tigers Conference and Events Venue

This meeting note is not a full transcript of the Preliminary Meeting. It is a summary of the key points discussed.

[Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange | National Infrastructure Planning \(planninginspectorate.gov.uk\)](https://planninginspectorate.gov.uk)

1. Welcome and Introduction

Robert Jackson (RJ) welcomed those present and introduced himself as the lead member of the Examining Authority (ExA) and Graham Sword (GS) and Matthew Heron (MH) introduced themselves as panel members to examine the Hinckley NRFI application.

RJ explained the appointment was made by delegation from the Secretary of State (SoS) on 11 July 2023.

RJ explained that the ExA would be examining the application made by Tritax Symmetry (Hinckley) Limited ('the Applicant') before making a recommendation to the SoS for Transport who will decide whether an Order granting Development Consent for the proposed project, which is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP), should be made.

GS explained the purpose of the Preliminary Meeting (PM) and noted that the Examination will commence after the PM closes.

The ExA confirmed that all documents and submissions received and accepted during the Examination will be published on the project-specific page of the National Infrastructure Planning website.

The video recording of this Preliminary Meeting is available on the National Infrastructure Planning website and can be accessed [here](#).

2. Examination Process

The ExA briefly explained the examination process under the Planning Act 2008 (PA2008), further info can be found in the [Advice Note 8.4](#)

The Applicant stated that in order to assist proceedings at future hearings it would be helpful if the agendas were detailed.

The ExA replied that it was its intention to provide more detailed agendas, to facilitate participation and discussion.

Elmesthorpe Stands Together asked if it would be possible for any of the Hearings to take place in the evening or at weekends, as not all stakeholders are free to attend during office hours.

The ExA responded that an Open Floor Hearing has been scheduled for the evening of 30 October 2023 at the Leonardo Hotel, Hinckley Island, virtual participation would be possible and that recordings of Hearings can be watched and the opportunity then exists to make submissions in writing.

3. Initial Assessment of Principal Issues

The ExA explained the purpose of the Initial Assessment of Principal Issues (section 88 of the PA2008), which can be found in [Annex C](#) of the [Rule 6 letter](#) of 11 August 2023 and asked for any observations on them.

National Highways raised matters relating to traffic and transportation, stating that operations of the Strategic Road network should be considered separately from the rail network. In addition, another item should also be included, which is the provision of access to sustainable transport.

Warwickshire County Council raised Traffic and Transport modelling as an Issue.

Burbage Parish Council raised traffic impact figures as an issue.

Council for the Protection of Rural England (Leicestershire) asked how climate change matters would be examined. The ExA explained that this will be covered as part of the effects on air quality.

Miss Victoria Stapleton on behalf of Dr Luke Evans MP, highlighted issues which were most important to local people. The ExA welcomed these comments and confirmed that these issues were already included in the list of principal issues.

Councillor Terry Richardson, the leader of Blaby District Council, stated that, as a Council, Blaby are not opposed to new development, but the development had to be properly informed. Highways information produced by the applicant is currently incomplete, which means that the impacts of the scheme have not been properly considered and the mitigation required is unknown. All parties must have time to consider such information as part of a thorough consultation.

The Applicant replied that consultation material is based upon information that is available at the time and is characterized as preliminary environmental information. Consultation is detailed in the consultation report, which form part of the application.

The ExA stated that interested parties have an absolute right to point out why they think information is deficient and should put that to the ExA, so that it can examine that point. If it transpires that the information is deficient, it shall take this into account in the recommendation to the SoS.

The ExA raised whether the environmental assessment has robustly considered the proposed development by utilising what is known as the Rochdale envelope. The ExA referred to Planning Inspectorate [Advice Note Nine: Rochdale Envelope](#)

The key propositions are that the environmental assessment should be based on cautious worst case approach. Such approach will then feed through to the mitigation measures envisaged. It's important that these should be adequate to deal with the worst case in order to optimise the effect of the development on the environment. Secondly, the level of information required should be sufficient information to enable the main or the likely remain likely significant effects in the environment to be assessed and the mitigation measures to be described.

Thirdly, the need for flexibility should not be abused. It will be for the Secretary of State to decide whether it is satisfied, of the likely significant effects on the environment. If he considers that an unnecessary degree of flexibility has been incorporated into the description of the development, then he can request more detail, or refuse consent.

The ExA wish to ensure that worst case scenarios have been assessed, given the range of potential employment set out in the Environmental Statement - Chapter 7 - Land Use and Socio-Economic Effects, which has an examination library reference of APP-116. A range of 8,400 to 10,400 workers in paragraph 7.214 or even up to 12,900 workers set out in paragraph 7.324.

The ExA understands that the lowest of these three employment levels, been used for determining traffic levels. Paragraph 1 of the Environmental Statement - Appendix 8.1 – Transport Assessment (APP-138) and several references within the other chapters indicate that that the traffic figures used there have been used for assessing the associated environmental effects.

The ExA asked the Applicant to confirm the potential employment figures and whether the appropriate worst case effects have been assessed, i.e. the 8400 workers that is set out as the base for those environmental effects.

The Applicant explained traffic figures had been generated from two sources. The development is envisaged to be a mixture of both national and regional distribution centres, based on a formula produced by the former Homes and Community Agency, and that these have differing employment figures. The extent of the two types of distribution centres is not yet known. Trip generation by the proposed use is also factored into the traffic assessment. The Applicant accepted that there were discrepancies in the figures quoted in the Environmental Statement in terms of the traffic impacts and it would look to rectify this as the examination progresses.

A technical note explaining these figures shall be produced and submitted into the examination.

4. Procedural Decisions

The ExA noted requests, already received in writing, to amend the draft Examination Timetable contained in Annex C of Rule 6 letter and also welcomed further suggestions

from the parties in attendance. The ExA also set out procedures for the submission of amended documents, these should be submitted with one clean version and one 'tracked changes' document.

All comments received were duly noted by the ExA and considerations will be reflected in the Rule 8 Letter.

The Examination Timetable can be found in the Rule 8 letter published on 22 September 2023.

5. Draft examination Timetable

The ExA clarified the purpose of:

- Issue Specific Hearings
- Compulsory Acquisition Hearings
- Open Floor Hearings
- Accompanied Site Inspections
- Unaccompanied Site Inspections

The ExA sought comments on the arrangements for the above events. These were duly noted and considered by the ExA.

Further information relating to hearings and site inspections can be found in our [Advice Note 8.5](#)

6. Any Other Matters

The ExA clarified the procedural decisions made under section 89(3) of the PA2008 and asked for any observations.

Procedural decisions can be found in Annex D of the Rule 6 Letter.

Mrs Sharon Scott, in writing, regarding additional site visits at Junction 21 A to assess traffic during term time.

Councillor David Bill – The condition of the road network in Leicestershire, what provisions have been made for over 50,000 vehicles in this area.

The Applicant – A schedule of a Status of negotiations in relation to compulsory acquisitions has been submitted, the Applicant asked if the schedule was in a suitable format .

Deborah Cooper – When will the traffic information be submitted to further consider the application. The ExA set out additional information had been submitted but not yet considered. However, it is up to the Applicant to submit whatever information they see fit, and it is at their own risk if the information is subsequently found to be deficient.

Rebecca Roper, Huncote Parish Council, sought clarity on Open Floor Hearings and a response given by the ExA.

No comments have been made by any of the parties in attendance”

7. Preliminary Hearing Closed