

## **Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange Comments on Behalf of Sharnford Parish Council**

### **Relevant Representation**

*Sharnford is a small village in Blaby District lying 3 miles away from the HNRFI project. The village already experiences heavy traffic, due to its proximity to the A5, Magna Park at Lutterworth and the new DPD and Amazon facilities near M69 Junction 1. At the Boundary with Leicester City lies Croft Quarry. This quarry is one of the largest excavated holes in Europe and is a major source of granite for the construction industry and, when it reaches the end of its mining life, it is expected to become a landfill site with vast quantities of London's waste as well as rubble from the HS2 rail line being dumped there. Most tipper lorries to and from this site travel through Sharnford, losing some of their load on the tight corners adjacent to the Bricklayers Public House. The proposed interchange will increase the amount of traffic in the area, not to mention the effect it will have on the environment! This national infrastructure project will never use the proposed rail link due to the major constraints at Narborough Railway level crossing. The rail aspect is being used to circumvent normal local authority planning processes. The project is a method of constructing major warehousing in the countryside with all traffic travelling by road. Currently Sharnford, a small village adjacent to the major trunk road A5, has seen an increase in HGV traffic of over 500 thousand vehicle movements per year due to existing expansion of local warehousing developments. It is envisaged that the HNRFI will see all traffic through Sharnford double to over 7 million vehicle movements on the already overburdened B-road, causing major increases in pollution.*

### **BACKGROUND**

1. Sharnford, a village of 1100 residents, lies approximately 3 miles Southeast of the proposed HNRFI development
2. The village is mainly residential but includes a small industrial estate straddling Aston Lane, comprising of a HGV transport company, a container hire company with storage facilities, a forklift hire company, and various SME's. In addition, there is a post office, garage and two pubs.
3. There is a Village Hall opposite the Bricklayers pub where the B4114 splits in two.
4. There is a play area with a Youth/Community Hall north of the B4114 on the Soar Brook that runs through the village, and a Recreation Ground immediately South of the B4114.
5. Sharnford CofE Primary School is on the Northern edge of the village.

6. There is no regular bus service and Villagers rely on private cars to access Hinckley for many services.
7. The village straddles the B4114, which is a major HGV route from the A5 to Leicester and links to the B4669 towards Jn2 of the M69 (and the proposed HNRFi site).
8. Sharnford has suffered over many years with the increase in HGV traffic and was recommended for a bypass in the Leicestershire Local Transport Plan 2007. This did not take place due to financial constraints. Since then, traffic volume through the village has risen from just under 3 million vehicles per year to well over 3.5 million.
9. After many appeals to Leicestershire County Council and news reports on BBC radio and television, Leicestershire County Council relented, and average speed cameras were installed. Speeds have reduced but traffic volumes continue to increase.
10. Refuges at the entrance to the village have also been put in to reduce speeding traffic.
11. At the B4669 end the B4114 passes residential estates before it narrows at the Church. The hill from the Church down towards the centre of the village is so narrow that two HGVs cannot pass each other without mounting the pavement. The properties along this section of road do not have off-street parking and must find alternative parking solutions.
12. The B4114 splits in the middle of the village into two one-way sections through residential areas and emerges to a short stretch before a second refuge indicates the end of the village, also with speed signs.
13. There are tight bends on both the one-way sections, most notably exactly at the Junction with Aston Road, where there is a warning to slow down.
14. Access to Sharnford can also be gained via Aston Lane, through Aston Flamville. There is a pinch point on Aston Lane close to the Junction due to a Grade 2 listed farm building where only one Lorry can enter the narrow section.
15. There is one pedestrian crossing on the B4114, close to the garage, which is used particularly by children going to school and has a patrol sign. The CofE school no longer take children to St Helens church because of the near misses on the pedestrian crossing and the narrowness of the pavement adjacent to the post office. There is also a sign for children crossing adjacent to Fox Hollies.
16. We consider it is already hazardous for pedestrians trying to access the only shop/post office in the village, especially as lorries must mount the narrow pavements on the B4114 to pass each other.
17. The junction of the B4114 with the A5, known locally as Smockington Hollow, has caused concerns over the number of accidents and fatalities. Crashmaps shows

4 (one serious) in the last five years, as well as a series of accidents along the B4114 between Sharnford and the Junction (up to 2021).

18. There have also been many crashes on the Aston Lane route, including the very tight bend just outside the village where vehicles have overturned or gone through hedges and fences into fields.

19. Sadly, there have also been two fatal cycling accidents at the junction of the B4669/B4114 since 2020. There are no dedicated cycling lanes so most local cycling is done on road. The bridleways are not generally suitable for cyclists.

20. Like many of the local villages Sharnford is linked into the extensive local Public Rights of Way network, notably the bridleway which extends towards the proposed HNRFI site and a bridleway to Sapcote. Villagers also enjoy their proximity to Burbage Common and are particularly concerned about threats to this amenity.

## **CONCERNS**

21. We are concerned that the HNRFI proposals could have a cumulative effect of adding some 10,000+ vehicle movements per day onto rural roads.

22. Their premise is that traffic will use the M69 towards either M1 or M6 which ignores the current congestion at these junctions.

23. We think the effect of M69 congestion and motorway closures will be to push vehicles, including HGVs, onto roads through Sapcote, Hinckley, Aston Flamville and Sharnford.

24. We note that at present the evidence does not include the 'emergency' plan if the M69 is not available and we cannot find any evidence on where HGVs would go in this 'worst-case' scenario.

25. As shown in the photos, the road through Aston Flamville (a conservation village) and Sharnford, are not suitable for high levels of traffic, especially HGVs.

26. The Transport Assessment (Figure 5-7) acknowledges that the B4114 is an undesirable route for lorries. Figs 5-8 and 5-9 suggest it would be one of the roads that benefitted from reduced traffic (on the apparent assumption that more local traffic heads to the M69 Jn2 when the new slip-roads are available)

27. However, at the same time Aston Lane sees a considerable growth in traffic. Table 8.19 of the ES Chapter on Transport shows an increase of over 100% in the with-development traffic on the two count points on that road but claims it is not close to sensitive receptor, even though the STRAVA data presented in the Sustainable Transport Strategy identifies it as an important cycle route.

28. The model also allows for a decrease of traffic at both the Smockington Hollow Junction 7% (J44) and the Sharnford Road Junction with the B4114 22% (J53)

although the junction with the B4669 is predicted to rise by 17% (J41) (Table 7-2 of the TA).

29. We consider all these findings are highly speculative and that the capacity constraints which already exist (and will only get worse) meaning that these benefits will never emerge. Local people will continue to use the Sharnford Road cut-through for example.

30. Not only that but as well as the development traffic which appears to be under-estimated, certainly not a worst-case scenario, the introduction of the slip roads as well as proposals for new housing around the Junction, facilitated by the slip road changes, will lead to worse traffic problems, including more HGVs through all the villages.



Figure 1 B4114 adjacent to Post Office

31. This will have knock on effects it terms of pollution and noise, including nighttime traffic to the site.

32. We are also concerned particularly about the impact on vulnerable users, pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians as well as access to amenities such as Burbage Common.

33. For these reasons we continue to oppose development of the HNRFi site and believe it should be refused permission.



Figure 2 Aston Lane junction with B4114