

**Hinckley National Rail Freight – Written Representation- Councillor Maggie Wright – Registration Number 20037532**

I write as County Councillor for the Stoney Stanton and Croft Division and District Councillor for the Fosse Normanton Ward. I represent residents at the location where the proposed Hinckley National Rail Freight interchange is to be located and the surrounding Fosse Villages (Aston Flamville, Croft, Elmesthorpe, Huncote, Leicester Forest West, Potters Marston, Sapote, Sharnford, Stoney Stanton, Thurlaston, and Wigston Parva) which will be impacted. I strongly oppose this application. My reasons are eloquently expressed in the technical submissions made by Blaby District Council and Leicestershire County Council. These are my local area authorities and I wholeheartedly support their submissions. I also agree with the statement made by the Leader of Blaby District Council at the opening of the hearings that the current process is meaningless and should be paused.

It is extremely difficult for anyone to make accurate written representation on the merits or flaws of this application when so much crucial information has been either omitted, unresolved, not assessed or submitted by the applicant. Statutory consultees and technical experts are struggling so how can ordinary members of the public be expected to make informed comments?

The public consultation was totally inadequate. The feedback forms provided at public exhibitions were biased towards the developer's proposals and presented leading questions rather than stimulating open debate and getting genuine answers. Residents attending exhibitions complained about "vague" detail. Many were left confused as to what they were being consulted on and not truly understanding the scale, implications and impacts being proposed. The decision not to provide a bypass around the southern villages highlights this. The applicant prematurely dismissed it, after suggesting they had received enormous opposition but gave no transparent justification and used modelling not agreed by the local highways' authority. It is unfair that several of my parish councils have engaged professional consultants to respond to technical submissions only to find fundamental evidence has not been presented by the applicant. They have in fact wasted time, effort, and money in trying to ensure their parishioners are adequately represented but have not been given the facts to do so.

Communities and councillors have been treated with indifference by the applicant because the scheme is not being determined locally and they are not the decision makers. The bare minimum of information and engagement has taken place to "tick boxes" to comply with the NSIP application submission process to PINS. There has been no genuine community engagement. No signs of partnership working, and poor community sum payments offered which are disproportionate to the scale of damage which would be implemented if consent is granted. It is good practice for potential long-term businesses and employers in the area to be actively engaged. No community Liaison Group was formed or offered. There are several active examples of these operating within my division which would have been easy to replicate, model and implement. The Fosse Villages Neighbourhood Plan links six parish councils and four parish meetings. This group is now meeting as a Development Forum to shape their future. A ready-made platform for engagement. The very late attempts to

engage the community came after the application was submitted. Too little too late. I truly worry if the application is approved what if any community stakeholder engagement will take place. If this two-way communication platform is not instigated how will community voices be heard, problems addressed, and resolutions delivered?

I have significant concerns relating to the lack of Highways modelling and traffic mitigations. But without this information little factual representation can be made only assumptions on existing patterns and known issues. The sheer numbers of proposed additional traffic movements will cause colossal serious impacts on the Fosse Villages, rural and major road networks. I agree with the principal of a rail freight interchange taking traffic off the road, but this application does not clearly demonstrate the case. It takes traffic off the A1 from Felixstowe but “dumps” 9,000 to 11,000 extra HGV traffic movements a day in Leicestershire for onward distribution with no seen mitigation proposals. It will also significantly increase the number of private vehicle movements from an estimated 8,400 to 10,000 new employees. Alternative sustainable methods of transport offered are extremely poor, inappropriate to the area and have not been properly planned. The rural network is through small rural villages which in places cannot physically be improved. They were built for horse and carts. They are at capacity and will become rat runs. Too often now HGVs and vehicles must mount pavements to get through narrow streets. Our rural area is being stripped of quality PROW and bridleways. The proposed diversions are inadequate in quality and poorly laid out. Walkers and riders now go from enjoying the countryside to an urban shed experience.

There does not appear to be any improvements to walking and cycling routes to encourage potential employees from the Stoney Stanton or Sapcote to walk to work. Likewise, is true for the settlements of Hinckley and Burbage. There should not be a reliance on private travel. The applicant has not looked properly at sustainable links to Hinckley railway station. Demand Responsive Transport provides a limited opportunity (and is only at pilot stage) as opposed to fixed shuttle bus services given the proposed working patterns of the site. I am concerned employees will start to park on nearby village streets and walk to work rather than attempt to get through traffic congestion entering and leaving the site at peak shift changes.

The scheme is pursuing carbon offsetting but providing no attempt to reduce localised pollution (noise, light, and traffic). The local area is already known as “Asthma Alley” because of the number of people suffering from respiratory conditions. I am chairman of the Old School Surgery Patient Participation Group. The surgery is at capacity and will not cope with any additional pressures. Health and wellbeing and public health will deteriorate with limited and restricted access to Burbage Woods and open spaces. Little reference or consideration has been given to the Travellers site at Aston Firs which is immediately adjacent to the site. Poor mitigations proposals have been put forward to eliminate 24-hour noise and light pollution and will certainly impact residents’ health.

The scheme will result in significant environmental impacts on the landscape and be visible for several miles. Significant loss of green fields, open space, woodlands, trees, and hedgerows. Fragmentation of habitats. There are no details for long-term ecological

management. Approximately 440 acres of agricultural land will be lost contrary to the Government's Food Security Strategy. This compounds the already vast losses of rural agricultural land acreages within the Fosse Village to large Solar Farms and Battery storage facilities which is leading to over urbanisation of our countryside.

The rural landscape will be changed by the bulk, scale, and fabric of the proposed A47 link road. The A47 is already a busy road with traffic congestion backing up daily. Residents have difficulty leaving farm entrances and village junctions. If the M69 is closed traffic will use this as an alternative route to junction twenty-one causing issues at the Desford Crossroads and Mill Hill, Enderby by the church.

Narborough Level Crossing will experience additional downtime which will impact all users. Cyclist will have to physically carry bikes over the stepped footbridge or wait for the barrier to lift. Those with mobility issues or mums with pushchairs will have to wait until the barrier is lifted. Traffic will back up onto the B4114. Poor air quality will be generated as cars wait to cross.

Croft quarry is located within my division and has been worked for decades. It was granted planning permission in 2022 for further lateral extension and for the restoration of the quarry void. Filling the void is essential and will have massive long-term benefits to the local communities. Biodiversity, cycleways, and walking routes. Infilling will require the importation of inert material from the southeast **by train**. It is essential that the operational workings of the quarry and restoration is not prejudiced by the HNRI. Train capacity should be guaranteed on the rail network.

To conclude I oppose the application is the strongest possible terms and I am thoroughly disappointed in the applicants lack of community stakeholder engagement and transparency. I cannot make detailed comments, only some observations because information is not available, but echo representations made by Blaby District Council and Leicestershire County council.

Maggie Wright

Leicestershire County Councillor for the Stoney Stanton and Croft Division

Blaby District Councillor for Fosse Normanton Ward