

Comments on additional submissions received by deadline 5

Tritax and Network Rail

1. Tritax state that the congestion at junction 21 M1 is a long-standing issue and acknowledge that there is no commitment to fix it. Tritax are making no investment in this junction. They state that the operation of HNRFI will have little impact on junction 21. This is a frankly ludicrous assertion. Tritax see South Leicester as one of their three key markets. The M69 is the main route into South Leicester from HNRFI. Other routes would involve using non-strategic routes such as A47 – which was never designed to take the expected level of HGV traffic that HNRFI will generate – or, even worse, ‘B’ roads through the villages. Furthermore, Leicester City Council state that they expect a significant number of employees for HNRFI to come from the Leicester City. In view of the lack of rail transport to the area, these employees will have to drive or be bussed in via junction 21. I have bitter personal experience of Junction 21, having commuted via M69 / M1 / A46 into Leicester for many years. I have missed countless early business meetings and personal evening engagements due to congestion at this junction. If HNRFI is approved with no improvement to junction 21 (and it would have to be a significant improvement), it will compound the misery currently experienced by residents of the area and result in increased loss of productivity.

2. Tritax continue to state that Magna Park will be a key market for HNRFI. This means that more warehouses will be built to support a 9 mile road journey to a complex of warehouses that is already the largest dedicated logistics park in Europe. The onward journey from Magna Park will then be largely by HGV, so it is difficult to see how this is helping to decarbonize the UK. In their response to my deadline 4 submission, Tritax say that a rail link to Magna Park would be unfeasible due to crowding on the West Coast Main Line and to funding issues. As regards the first point, connection to the West Coast Main Line is not the only option for rail connecting Magna Park. (See LutetworthLine – Freight Report that I submitted for deadline 5), and I would have thought that the HS2 link between London and Birmingham ought to free up capacity on the West Coast Main Line. As regards the second point, funding is always an issue for major infrastructure projects, but I am not aware that the possibility of contributions from Gazeley plc, the operator of Magna Park, or long-standing tenants, in order to enable them to fulfill their net zero commitments, has been explored. Tritax say that a commercial development provides funding to secure land for infrastructure, but they are proposing minimal highway improvements to the area around HNRFI – in particular, they are not proposing any contribution to improve junction 21 M1.

3. Network Rail state that there is currently no commitment to electrify the Felixstowe to Nuneaton Line, although this is likely to be required in the medium to long term. All services will be diesel and / or diesel alternative fuel. This means that HNRFI is unlikely to play any major role in decarbonizing the UK for decades to come.

4. Network Rail talk about a possible consolidation role for HNRFI given its position on the cross-country route from Felixstowe to West Midlands, with connections to the West Coast Main Line at Nuneaton. However, during the examination, Tritax have mentioned both blockages at Water Orton, which impacts on the route into the West Midlands, and congestion on the West Coast Main Line at Nuneaton. In an earlier deadline submission, they confirmed that many of the freight trains serving HNRFI will return to the ports empty. This all suggests that the most likely method of operation for HNRFI will be to bring freight in from Felixstowe by diesel- hauled rail and then drive it up and down the UK by long-haul HGV – either directly from HNRFI or via Magna Park. It is extremely difficult to see how this can play any meaningful role in decarbonizing the UK.

5. Network Rail have failed to send a representative with technical expertise to any of the public hearings, so neither local residents nor the local councils have had the opportunity to put questions directly to them.

I strongly support transfer of freight from road to rail, but nothing that I have seen or heard during the examination process has convinced me that HNRFI will achieve this objective. Many of the HGVs that currently route through the Midlands are doing so as part of a long-haul road trip and are not serving the local area. It is evident that a large part of HNRFI will be long-haul HGV, either via Magna Park or directly from HNRFI. This will only add to the highway congestion in our area. We need to work towards ensuring that freight passing through the Midlands does so by rail thereby removing HGVs from our roads and alleviating pressure on key junctions such as junction 21 M1. Only a national network of SRFIs located across the country will wean the logistics industry from its reliance on the ‘Golden Triangle,’ and achieve this aim.