



**ELMESTHORPE PARISH COUNCIL**



Rt Hon Louise Haigh MP, Secretary of State for Transport  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

1<sup>st</sup> August 2024

Dear Secretary of State for Transport

**RE: HINCKLEY NATIONAL RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE**

I would like to open by first expressing my congratulations on your appointment to government. I do appreciate that your time is a rare commodity and I'd like to thank you in advance for giving this correspondence your consideration.

Elmesthorpe Parish Council has been actively engaged in the application for the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange since its inception, during the Final Consultations with the Applicant, and throughout the NSIP Process with the Planning Inspectorate. We are not opposed to change or appropriate development however our involvement over several years with this proposal has left us with considerable concerns.

Elmesthorpe is a small village with around 500 residents, mainly consisting of farmland, smallholdings, equestrian businesses and pleasant residential areas. Although this proposal is labeled as Hinckley, around 95% of the operational site will be located within Elmesthorpe. I raise this point as it has been very noticeable throughout the application how little Elmesthorpe has been mentioned or annotated on maps hence providing a very misleading impression of the proximity of the proposal to our residents, and the overwhelming damaging effects it would have on those living here.

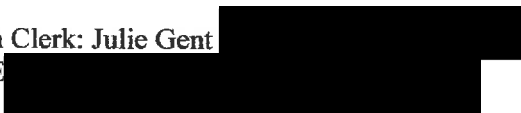
All of our extensive concerns have been raised throughout the NSIP process with the Planning Inspectorate and we trust these have been duly considered as part of their recommendation, however please find below a brief overview:

**1. Location**

- 1.1. The Applicant has not been able to satisfactorily justify the need for this proposal at this specific location. Only a very limited area set at the genesis of the project has been explored and it is considered that an alternative site elsewhere in the country would provide enhanced benefits and be more nationally strategic, without being proposed on a site as

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constrained, that compounds existing infrastructure issues and is incredibly detrimental to local communities.

- 1.2. Despite the Examining Authorities' questions, the Applicant was unable to provide details of the current availability at numerous existing SRFIs that are extremely close to the proposed HNRFI. It is maintained that there is already sufficient RFI provision within this part of Leicestershire and wider scope should be considered to identify a more appropriate location.
- 1.3. This particular stretch of rail is not a mainline, and when considering the limitations of this stretch of rail, Network Rail has only been able to respond with 'aspirations' of improvement, but no firm plans.

## **2. Green Credentials**

- 2.1. Elmesthorpe Parish Council are concerned that the Applicant's proposal to *limit* the production of renewable and sustainable energy is contrary to government objectives, and is purely proposed to avoid triggering the need for a separate NSIP application.

## **3. Visual Impact, Noise and Lighting**

- 3.1. In Elmesthorpe, the closest residential property is circa 250-300m from the northern wall of Unit 4. The closest horse stables are only 100m from the northern wall of Unit 4. The closest residential properties to the north-west of the Railport are on Billington Road East and are merely 250-300m away.
- 3.2. In the Applicant's Residential Assessment, effects on nearly all residential properties in Elmesthorpe were described as 'Very High, Major, Long-term-Permanent, Adverse, Significant.'
- 3.3. Elmesthorpe Parish Council is aware that due to the extreme proximity, there is very little that can be done to protect the residents of Elmesthorpe against prolonged construction noise for a period of 10+ years and 24-hour operational noise in perpetuity of the functioning HNRFI.
- 3.4. The introduction of a Rail Freight Interchange and extensive new highways lighting will be unbearably stark and disruptive. When adding the elevated light levels to the relentless noise levels to be experienced at night; there is a very real threat to the quality of sleep of residents and the subsequent effect on resident's abilities to perform well in their jobs, children's educations, hobbies and vocations alongside valid concerns of effects on general well being.

## **4. Flooding & Drainage Issues**

- 4.1. There are known problematic areas in Elmesthorpe with regards to flooding and sewerage. We still hold major concerns that issues with drainage and sewerage infrastructure locally will be exacerbated. The Applicant takes the stance that it is the responsibility of STW and no heed has been given to the extra inconvenience residents will suffer as a direct consequence of this proposal.

## **5. PRoW & Access to Burbage Common/Woods**

- 5.1. The increase in the length of the alternative PRoWs is very long, and for some, now too long. As well as the decrease in amenity value of our PRoW, they are now less accessible in length to those with mobility issues, small children, poor health or simply just the time constraints of daily life.
- 5.2. The introduction of the SRFI effectively alienates Elmesthorpe from our currently much-loved and well utilized Burbage Common and Woods SSSI, including Elmesthorpe Plantation.

## **6. Construction**

- 6.1. During construction phase (10-12 years) the impact upon residents to access essential services such as doctors, schools, chemists, post offices and supermarkets will be severely impacted. The quantum of highways works that will surround Elmesthorpe in every direction and at almost every connecting junction will isolate villagers from amenities required: the delays will be constant and extensive.
- 6.2. Dust and noise during construction period will directly impact resident's enjoyment of homes and gardens, and will negatively affect independent businesses and livestock in the area too.

## **7. Highways and Traffic Issues**

- 7.1. Elmesthorpe's only alternative vehicular access into the village will be entirely removed should the proposal go ahead, and any incidents that prevent access along the entirety of B581 Station Road, or from either end of Station Road B581 will severely affect residents and emergency services. The B581 through Elmesthorpe frequently experiences accidents resulting in road blockages/closures. The only available detours will be significant.
- 7.2. The Parish Council remains critically concerned about the impact on the entire local road infrastructure and the wider strategic road network. An issue that has been highlighted by every other local authority and National Highways.

## **8. Concluding Remarks**

- 8.1. Elmesthorpe Parish Council is not opposed to development and progression. The areas immediately surrounding the village are currently subject to a high quantity of upcoming large proposals and Elmesthorpe Parish Council engage willingly.
- 8.2. Throughout the process it has been abundantly clear that this proposal leads to a great many problems. Problems that are unable to be mitigated fully, or even meaningfully enough, to make this bearable for those living around it.
- 8.3. The amount of issues having to be mitigated in order to force this 'square peg into a round hole,' should be a warning sign as to the improper and unsuitable location of such a development. As well as becoming an excruciating problem for the residents and villages around it, it will potentially become a catastrophe for the Applicants themselves.
- 8.4. Elmesthorpe will be heavily impacted and damaged by all associated negative effects (with the exemption of barrier downtime at Narborough Station). The numerous hearings, meetings and continually evolving reports have not assuaged our sizeable concerns.

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- 8.5. In addition to the devastating force of the negative impacts, HNRFI does not stand to benefit the community of Elmesthorpe in any way at all.
- 8.6. At this stage in the process, the Parish Council cannot stress enough how much Elmesthorpe will be harmed by the proposed HNRFI. Elmesthorpe will be permanently overshadowed by the enormous presence of the RFI and there will be absolutely no respite from it: visually or aurally; physically or mentally; day or night.
- 8.7. This is an entire village of people who stand to have their lives irreversibly altered, in a very detrimental way. We sincerely ask that you factor this into your decision with the weight that our residents deserve.

Once again, thank you so much for your time and considerations.

Yours sincerely,

  
Cllr. Rebecca Roper  
Elected Councillor for Elmesthorpe Parish Council

Parish Clerk: Julie Gent  
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