

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Hinckley SRFI; transportinfrastructure@dft.gov.uk](mailto:transportinfrastructure@dft.gov.uk); [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange (HNRFI)
Date: 06 February 2025 20:03:36

Dear Secretary of State for Transport,

Re: Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange (HNRFI)

We appreciate your time and consideration in reviewing this correspondence. Elmesthorpe Stands Together (EST) acknowledges the work undertaken by the Secretary of State and the Department for Transport in assessing the Examining Authority's (ExA) report, particularly in recognising the challenges posed by this application.

Background and Concerns

EST has been actively engaged in the HNRFI application process for a number of years including participating in consultations and the NSIP Process with the Planning Inspectorate. Over these years, EST have developed serious concerns regarding the project's suitability. The overwhelming impact on Elmesthorpe and surrounding communities makes this an unviable proposal.

Elmesthorpe is a small village of around 500 residents across circa 300 dwellings. Despite being labeled as a Hinckley project, 95% of the operational site will be within Elmesthorpe. The Applicant has downplayed this fact in public documents, misleadingly omitting Elmesthorpe from key maps and assessments.

Environmental and Residential Impact

According to the Applicant's own Residential Assessment, the impact on nearly all properties in Elmesthorpe is classified as:

"Very High, Major, Long-term-Permanent, Adverse, Significant."

Key issues include:

- Proximity: Some homes would be around 300 meters from Unit 4, horse stables around 100 meters away, and the railport around 300 meters from homes.
- Noise and Light Pollution: 24-hour operational noise and highway lighting will cause unrelenting disruption to residents' sleep, well-being, and ability to work or study effectively.
- Severance of Burbage Common and Woods: The revised Public Right of Way (PRoW) rerouting forces pedestrians through low-amenity, high-traffic areas, effectively cutting off safe access.
- Highway Safety Issues in Sapcote: The Applicant's traffic assessments fail to reflect real road conditions, particularly near All Saints Primary School, where limited visibility and constrained parking present serious risks to children and families.

Failure to Address Key Infrastructure Concerns

Traffic and Road Network Failures

Local authorities and National Highways have repeatedly flagged concerns about the entire road network's inability to absorb the added congestion.

- M1 J21/M69 Overload: The Applicant acknowledges adding 4.9% more vehicles to an

already over-capacity junction but takes no responsibility for mitigating the impact. The precedent this sets is deeply troubling.

- M69 J2 Junction: Traffic modelling is flawed, underestimating the 555,984 additional HGV journeys per year, meaning congestion and safety risks are significantly higher than reported.
- HGV Monitoring Delays: Fixed financial penalties for unauthorised routes are welcome, but annual reporting fails to prevent long-term harmful patterns.

Response to the Applicant's Claims

In response to the Applicant's latest submission, the following concerns remain unaddressed:

Flawed Traffic Modelling and Infrastructure Mitigation:

- The Applicant argues that its modelling of M1 J21/M69 J3 is sufficient, despite National Highways flagging persistent concerns.
- The claim that only 4.9% additional vehicles will impact the junction ignores real-world peak-hour congestion issues.

Sapcote and Stoney Stanton Junctions Remain Unsafe:

- The Applicant's technical adjustments do not address the fundamental issue of severe congestion and safety risks in Sapcote village.
- Additional pedestrian improvements outside the Co-Op do not address the overall increase in heavy vehicle traffic.

Aston Firs Traveller Site Impact Still Not Resolved:

- While the acoustic barrier height has been reduced, the significant increase in noise pollution remains a major concern.
- The Applicant dismisses concerns as insignificant, despite clear evidence that noise levels will drastically affect the community's quality of life.

Failure to Justify Economic Benefits:

- The Applicant's claims of job creation fail to account for the displacement of local employment, as many roles will not be filled by local residents.
- Market support remains unsubstantiated, with no clear commitment from businesses set to occupy the site.

Legal and Environmental Missteps:

- The Applicant's argument under the Equality Act 2010 is dismissive, implying that economic benefits override legal protections for vulnerable groups.
- Their public transport strategy remains weak, failing to provide meaningful

alternative travel solutions to mitigate road congestion.

Additional areas of concern:

The Applicant referenced an application in Aldenham, Hertfordshire, intended to counter the ExA's claim of "missed opportunities for greater energy production" by capping production at 49.9MW. They asserted that planning application APP/N1920/W/22/3295268 was approved by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up Housing and Communities. However, all official documents show that the application was refused, and the subsequent appeal dismissed, so planning permission remains denied.

Consequences of Allowing This Project to Proceed

Should this project be approved, it will result in irreversible damage to the environment and severely disrupt the lives of those residing in Elmesthorpe and the surrounding areas.

The significant long-term consequences include:

- Permanent environmental degradation impacting local biodiversity and farmland.
- Enduring noise, traffic congestion, and pollution that will diminish residents' quality of life.
- A fundamentally unsafe road network struggling to cope with additional heavy vehicle movement.
- Loss of community identity and severance from important local amenities.

Elmesthorpe Stands Together (EST) is not opposed to development. However, we insist that any project must be appropriate for its location, fully mitigated, and sustainable—the HNRFI fails on all counts.

We urge the Secretary of State for Transport to uphold the Examining Authority's recommendation and refuse this application.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Elmesthorpe Stands Together (EST)