

2.1. DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1. As described in Chapter 1, the draft chapters contained in this ES provide information regarding the Applicant's ongoing assessment of the likely impacts of the proposed development and the mitigation measures proposed. The draft chapters represent the latest outputs from a wide range of technical work, some of which is not yet finalised.
- 2.2. The draft chapters are all based on a common description of development, and on the key parameters identified for the proposals. The description of development set out below should be read in conjunction with the details set out on the Parameters Plan; together these form the parameters on which the Environmental assessment is based. The latest version of the Parameters Plan accompanies the ES and is enclosed as Document 2.10 – it is reproduced in this Chapter as Figure 2.1.

The Site

- 2.3. The proposed Northampton Gateway SRFI is located on land to the west of Junction 15 of the M1 and to the east of the Northampton Loop railway line in Northamptonshire. The proposal includes associated highway works described in detail below.
- 2.4. The main SRFI site has an area of approximately 210 hectares, and the total application area covers an area of approximately 290 hectares incorporating all of the land containing works associated with the package of highways improvements.
- 2.5. As described below, the proposed development has various components and the terminology used to describe the sites or land involved in these components is as follows:

“proposed development” – all the development within the order limits (red line), including land to enable delivery of the various off-site highways mitigation measures.

“main site” - the SRFI site lying between the M1 motorway and the Northampton Loop line, along with the works associated with the new highway access from the A508.

“highway mitigation works” – the improvements to Junction 15, 15A, and several local junctions associated with the A508 corridor, including the *“bypass corridor”* of the proposed Roade Bypass.

Description of Development

- 2.6. The proposed development comprises:
 - An intermodal freight terminal including container storage and HGV parking, rail sidings to serve individual warehouses, and with the capability to also provide a 'rapid rail freight' facility as part of the intermodal freight terminal;
 - Up to 468,000 sq m (approximately 5 million sq ft) (gross internal area) of warehousing and ancillary buildings, with additional floorspace provided in the form of mezzanines;

- New road infrastructure and works to the existing road network, including the provision of a new access and associated works to the A508, a new bypass to the village of Roade, improvements to Junction 15 and to J15A of the M1 motorway, the A45, and other highway improvements at junctions on the local highway network;
- Strategic landscaping and tree planting, including diverted public rights of way;
- Earthworks and demolition of existing structures on the SRFI site.

2.7. It is important to be aware that some aspects of the scheme could be subject to refinement or change as a result of the ongoing consultation process, or the ongoing technical and environmental assessment work. The final ES will be clear about both the description of development, and the final Parameters which underpin the assessments.

2.8. The following section provides a fuller explanation of the various elements of the description of development:

Intermodal Freight Terminal (Zone B)

2.9. The terminal is designed to accommodate trains of up to 775m length (standard freight train length), and to accommodate up to 16 trains per day once fully operational over the longer-term. In the early period after opening the site is expected to see 4 trains per day.

2.10. The terminal would enable the transfer of freight from road to rail (and vice versa), as well as the storage of containers or other freight at the terminal itself, and HGV parking.

2.11. The rail freight terminal will be built and completed prior to first occupation of any warehouse on the site. It is expected to then be expanded in phases in response to market demand and activity.

2.12. The terminal will comprise:

- Main line connections to the Network Rail WCML Northampton Loop
- A set of three 775 meter Reception Sidings
- A 775 metre headshunt and run round loop to permit shunting moves around the site
- A three track intermodal terminal, again of 775m capability
- An extensive container and other freight storage area
- HGV parking
- Management offices and welfare area
- Gatehouses
- Rail connections directly to over half the warehousing

2.13. The terminal also includes provision for a Rapid Rail Freight terminal as part of the 'future-proofing' to enable the site to meet a range of market requirements as the site is developed and occupied.

2.14. The proposed rail terminal will be connected to the West Coast Main Line railway 'Loop Line' with new north and south facing connections.

Warehousing and ancillary buildings (Zone A)

- 2.15. The application is for buildings within Zone A (see Parameters Plan) with an internal floorspace footprint of up to 468,000 sq. m. In addition to this floorspace figure, up to 155,000 sq. m of floorspace can be provided in the form of mezzanine floorspace to units within Zone A. The number and precise layout of buildings is not fixed, but the application includes an illustrative masterplan to show how this floorspace could be accommodated on the site. The height and broad layout of development plots on the site are fixed via the Parameters Plan. The final, detailed layout of the site will be determined post consent, but the expectation is for a range of large floorplate building sizes to be provided.
- 2.16. Much of the built floorspace would be located on development plots sunk into the site following a proposed earthworks strategy (see below) to not only create flat plateau but to also enable creation of substantial bunds around the site to form part of the visual screening (mitigation) and landscaping.
- 2.17. A small amount of ancillary floorspace is proposed within the rail freight terminal, as well as in gatehouses and other small ancillary buildings on the site.

New road infrastructure and works to the existing network

- 2.18. A package of highway works are proposed as part of the proposed development. These include substantial improvements to Junction 15 of the M1, and a new Bypass to the village of Roade to the south of the main site.
- 2.19. In addition, a wider range of more localised works are proposed to mitigate likely transport impacts, and to address existing known bottle-necks or problematic junctions which would otherwise see worsening reliability and/or safety in the future.
- 2.20. The proposed package of highway mitigation works is:
- Construction of a new roundabout on the A508 Northampton Road to serve as the access to the development, configured to require all departing HGVs to travel north to M1 Junction 15;
 - Dualling of the A508 carriageway between the new site access roundabout and M1 Junction 15;
 - Significant enlargement and reconfiguration of M1 Junction 15, including alterations to and widening of the A45 to the north of M1 Junction 15 and the signalisation of the Watering Lane junction;
 - Alteration of M1 Junction 15A to provide an additional lane and signalised on the A43 northbound approach, signal control on the M1 northbound off-slip, an additional lane on the A5123 southbound approach and circulatory carriageway widening;
 - A financial contribution towards a capacity improvement scheme at the A45 Queen Eleanor Interchange;
 - Construction of a new Bypass west of Roade between the A508 Northampton Road to the north of Roade and the A508 Stratford Road to the south of Roade, including a four arm roundabout connecting the Bypass to Blisworth Road;
 - 7.5T amenity weight restriction (with access permitted for loading):
 - throughout Roade
 - along Knock Lane/Blisworth Road between Roade Bypass and Stoke Road

- along Courteenhall Road between the A508 and High Street, including parts of Blisworth
- along the unnamed road between the A508 and Quinton.
- Alterations at key locations along the A508 as part of an 'A508 route upgrade'; comprising:
 - Courteenhall Road junction improvement
 - Rookery Lane/Ashton Road junction improvement
 - Pury Road junction improvement
 - Knock Lane/Stoke Road junction improvement
 - Provision of a pedestrian crossing at a bus stop in Grafton Regis.

2.21 Further details are provided in the Transport Chapter (Chapter 12) and associated appendices.

Earthworks, and demolition of existing structures

2.22 To enable development substantial earthworks will be undertaken, with some areas in the western part of the site being lowered by between 8 and 10 metres from existing ground levels. This change in levels is required to establish the flat plateau required for the buildings, and the 'cut and fill' exercise enables the creation of the bunding referred to in the context of the landscaping strategy.

2.23 The site is currently used primarily for arable agriculture, and small existing structures (former agricultural buildings) will be demolished.

Strategic landscaping, planting, and rights of way

2.24 The proposed development, includes provision of landscaping and tree planting as part of the mitigation of visual and landscape effects. The design of the main site incorporates a landscaping strategy which includes retention of existing woodland blocks within the site, as well as around parts of its boundary (such as along the M1).

2.21. The landscaping strategy compliments the earthworks strategy (also referred to below) which would create substantial landscaped bunds around much of the site perimeter, and which would form the bulk of the visual mitigation measures to substantially limit or eliminate outside views into the site.

2.25 The strategy would ensure the establishment of a strong and cohesive framework of landscape and environmental areas. These would form one of the main elements of the overall development and would be fully integrated with the built development and infrastructure zones. In this respect it has not been designed (or should not be considered) as a separate part of the proposed development.

2.26 A number of key landscape and visual considerations have been identified as part of the assessment process, and full details of them, and of the key issues and benefits, are provided in Chapter 4.

2.28 The bunds will also be planted with new trees, and will incorporate diverted public rights of way. The Proposed Development site currently contains a number of PROW, including six routes in and around parts of the Bypass corridor, and two footpaths which run across the Main Site. Further details of the existing and proposed routes are provided in the Transport Chapter, and the existing routes are also considered in the Landscape and Visual Chapter (Chapter 4).

Construction and Phasing

- 2.29. Details of construction and phasing will be set out as part of the application submission. Draft details have informed the work to date and it is anticipated that the general programme will broadly be broken down into four key components, as listed below:
- Off-site highway improvements;
 - *M1 J15 & A45 improvements and link to site access*
 - *M1 J15A improvements*
 - *Road Bypass and A508 improvements.*
 - On-site;
 - *Bulk earthworks*
 - *Landscaping*
 - *Road.*
 - Rail Terminal; and
 - Buildings.
- 2.30. The works are expected to be phased over a 5.5 year period, and this forms the basis of the assumptions in the draft ES. Assuming the Development Consent Order is made (i.e. assuming an approval) works are assumed to begin in 2019/2020.
- 2.31. If the Infrastructure or phasing programme is refined further these assumptions in the ES will be revised and updated prior to submission of the application.
- 2.32. However, the proposed approach to the phasing of works would see initial development commence on:
- The A508 site access junction and dualling of the A508 between the site access and M1 Junction 15;
 - The M1 Junction 15 and A45 improvements; and
 - On-site earthworks and roads.
- 2.33. Prior to occupation of the first building on the site, assumed to be 2021/22 at the earliest, the following works will have been completed:
- The A508 site access junction and dualling of the A508 between the site access and M1 Junction 15;
 - The M1 Junction 15 and A45 improvements;
 - Landscaping phases 1 and 2;
 - Road construction phases 1 and 2; and
 - Rail Terminal.

Alternatives

- 2.34. The EIA Regulations require applicants to provide an outline of the main alternatives studied by the applicant and an indication of the main reasons for the chosen proposal, taking into account the environmental effects. In considering alternatives, there are a number of aspects and scenarios to be taken into account. Examining alternatives should involve the consideration of alternative sites for the development, where this is feasible. It should however, also examine alternative design and mitigation approaches and where relevant alternative processes and technologies. This could include alternative approaches to construction activities. The assessments

of alternative sites have been limited to the SRFI element of the proposals and does not consider the highway works which are a consequence of the SRFI.

- 2.35. Alternative development scenarios and design approaches have been considered through the iterative process of site assembly, masterplanning, assessment and consultation. The starting point has been the national requirements for SRFIs, however as an iterative process the design of the proposed scheme has undergone many changes as part of a rigorous approach to its design development. These changes will be on-going as part of this consultation. This has been underpinned by the environmental assessment process, which has been used to both inform and test the proposals. The draft Design and Access Statement explains the approach to the proposals and why they are in the form they are.
- 2.36. The consideration of alternative sites is not always straight forward, as often it can be difficult to determine and appraise sites beyond the control of the applicant. An alternative site is being proposed on land between Blisworth and Milton Malsor, this site is referred to as Rail Central. This site, in the form currently proposed, would constitute a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange and would address many of the markets that would be addressed by Northampton Gateway. A full appraisal of Rail Central as an alternative site, including its likely environmental effects, is on-going and will form part of the application submission. At this stage in the process it is anticipated that our conclusions will be that Rail Central is an inferior alternative site because it is less able to serve key markets and logistics supply chains and would result in significantly greater environmental effects across a wide range of environmental factors.
- 2.37. Work undertaken to date also indicates that the cumulative environmental effects of the development of the Rail Central scheme in addition to Northampton Gateway, would be unacceptable.
- 2.38. No other alternative sites which could meet the requirements for a strategic Rail Freight Interchange and address the market demand which the Northampton Gateway SRFI is intended to serve.

FIGURE 2.1 – Draft Parameters Plan

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