

Northampton Gateway SRFI

Questions raised at the Blisworth PC meeting – 7th November:

Q. *Where are all the people to fill these jobs going to come from (local unemployment in the villages is very low)? 6,000 jobs will generate a lot of traffic – it is assumed no buses will be provided to the site, so there will be traffic problems, including in numerous villages assuming there will be people coming from a wide surrounding area.*

A. The detailed traffic modelling will begin once the Northamptonshire County Council Strategic Transport Model is updated – that work will help inform an understanding of the likely patterns of movement to and from the site, including any particular issues in terms of routing in the surrounding area. Once the modelling outputs are understood we can share further details about the responses and solutions to any such issues.

The site would include use of shifts, with travel spread across a number of change-overs rather than all during the traditional morning and evening peak times.

The proposals will include a Public Transport Strategy, and discussions are already underway about improvements to existing bus services as well as provision of new services to serve the site.

Q. *Who will build and then operate the terminal? Presumably Roxhill's interest will end once it's been approved and/or built, so what happens then to the promises and commitments given at this stage?*

A. Roxhill will build the development if approved. A terminal operator would be appointed, on a long-term contractual basis, but the site is expected to remain in the ownership of Roxhill's partner (SEGRO) over the long-term.

The terminal operator will be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the terminal, and will be encouraged to maximise the volumes of traffic moved by rail, but the overall responsibility for the operations on the site, including the environmental obligations, remains with the site owner.

Even if the site were sold to a 3rd party, the commitments and obligations secured through a legal agreement (equivalent to a Section 106 agreement) would be binding on whoever bought the site.

Q. *Are there any other examples of Roxhill's involvement in SRFI sites/projects?*

A. Yes – the East Midlands Gateway SRFI was approved in January of this year. This is also a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (regarded by Government as a Nationally Significant

Infrastructure Project) in Leicestershire, close to East Midlands Airport. Work on-site is due to begin in early 2017.

<http://www.eastmidlandsgateway.co.uk/> - the website is currently being updated to provide new information as the project enters its delivery phase.

Q. *Who will fund the Junction 15 improvements?*

A. Roxhill will fund the improvements to Junction 15 – these form part of the development proposals. The design and detail of the junction design is not yet confirmed but is being taken forward via a Transport Working Group including Highways England and Northamptonshire County Council.

Q. *Who will fund the Roade Bypass? Are you going to also be building houses associated with the Bypass?*

A. Roxhill will fund the Roade Bypass – these form part of the development proposals.
Roxhill is not a residential developer and new houses do not form any part of the proposals.

Q. *Has Network Rail provided any commitment to the scheme?*

A. We are in ongoing discussions with Network Rail who are fully aware of the proposals, and who will play an active role in helping deliver Government Policy regarding the growth and improvement of the rail network.

Technical work with Network Rail regarding how the site will be connected to the Northampton Loop is being undertaken. This will provide a basis for their input into the planning process as it progresses, but at this early stage they have confirmed their role in helping deliver the Government's policy of enabling more rail freight.

The establishment of a new SRFI in this area is consistent with Network Rail's Freight market Study (published in August 2016). This sets out Network Rail's view of the way in which in the rail freight market will grow up to 2043.

It is also consistent with DfT's Freight Strategy published in September 2016, which sets out Government's strategy for growing the proportion of freight moved by rail up to 2030.

Q. Will the Bypass include any restriction on HGVs (i.e. restriction on HGVs heading south)?

A. This can be controlled if the traffic modelling suggests that the likely flows of HGV traffic to and from the south will cause traffic problems – there are lots of examples of other sites where HGV routing is controlled and managed.

This issue will be examined once we have undertaken the transport modelling work (using Northampton County Council’s strategic transport model).

Q. Will Roxhill be investing in the rail network?

A. Roxhill would invest to deliver the main line rail connections and internal rail tracks needed to provide the proposed terminal and links to the proposed rail-served buildings.

Investment in the wider rail network is for Network Rail and Government in the context of their plans and strategies for the national rail network. Network Rail’s Freight Network Strategy sets out the investments it proposes to increase rail freight capacity across the national rail network. This document confirms that there is already sufficient capacity for freight growth south of Northampton.

Q. Is there any capacity for additional freight traffic on the WCML?

A. There is existing freight capacity to serve the proposals, partly because many of the existing freight paths are under-used or not used at all.

Furthermore, with the delivery of HS2 in 2026, additional new freight paths would also be created.

The application will be supported by a clear rail ‘case’, and we are working with Network Rail to confirm connectivity and capacity.

Q. Roxhill gave earlier indications that there were no intentions to connect the site to the rail network – why the change in position?

A. Following withdrawal of the earlier planning application for large-scale warehousing on a similar site (in Summer 2015) Roxhill considered a number of potential alternative development options. That included an increased amount of distribution development (around 5m sq.ft.) with improvements to Junction 15. Roxhill met informally with local groups to discuss some of these indicative ideas.

In the context of increasingly positive Government policy and market interest in rail freight the proposals evolved into an SRFI scheme. This evolution is a direct response to an explicit recognition by Government of the need for more SRFIs to help deliver the economic and

environmental benefits and outcomes from a continued shift from road to rail freight, and of the strategic attractiveness and suitability of the Northampton area.

Q. *Why is this the right place and the right time for a SRFI?*

A. The Northampton area remains a highly strategic and attractive area for logistics and distribution development. As part of the 'logistics golden triangle' the area has good access to markets across England, and remains a key location for strategic distribution activity. The proposed site has excellent access to the trunk road network, and is directly linked to the West Coast Main Line, which is the UK's main freight corridor (it handles over 40% of all UK rail freight). The area is highly attractive to the market with high demand for additional strategic rail connected distribution development.

Our proposals are a response to an explicit recognition of the need for more SRFIs to help deliver the economic and environmental benefits and outcomes from a continued shift from road to rail freight. Government policy is clear that there is a need for a network of SRFIs, and forecasts are for significant growth in freight traffic, including a doubling in the container traffic that the SRFI will handle by 2030. There is a long lead-in to the delivery of SRFIs taking into account the planning process and construction process – to deliver the capacity required by the national forecasts SRFIs need to be brought forward now.

Q. *Why does your ES Scoping Report dismiss the Rail Central site?*

A. The ES Scoping Report references early consideration of the likely effects of both Roxhill and Ashfield Land sites because an assessment of the cumulative effects is required as part of the Environmental Statement.

The Scoping Report includes the opinion that the overall likely cumulative effects of both sites may well be considered unacceptable. For example, there are likely to be significant landscape and visual effects, and our early judgement is that the Rail Central site is more sensitive in environmental terms than the Junction 15 site. However, the full assessment of cumulative effects has not yet been undertaken.

Our initial technical analysis suggests that it would be difficult to install connections to both sites within the existing Network Rail track and signalling infrastructure.

Q. *Are all of the required landowners aware of, and happy with, the proposals? Most of the land on the main SRFI site is in one ownership – are they involved?*

A. Roxhill is working with the main landowner for the SRFI site – they are fully aware of the proposals, and Roxhill has a purchase option on that land.

The Roade Bypass route is not yet finalised (it will form part of the public consultation process), but will involve land from a number of landowners – Roxhill has made contact with all of them and they too are aware of the proposals. Agreements are being pursued with the key landowners, although final positions with regard to land required won't be known until the route of the proposed Bypass is confirmed (expected in the first part of 2017).

Q. *Why do we need another SRFI here (in context of DIRFT)? What market would it serve? (only Northampton?)*

- A.** DIRFT alone will not provide the capacity needed to accommodate the forecast doubling in intermodal container rail freight traffic over the next 15 years. Even the additional capacity offered by DIRFT 3 is insufficient to meet these forecasts.

This site is 16 miles away from DIRFT, and an SRFI site here would help serve a different core market area based around Northampton, Wellingborough, Bicester and Milton Keynes, with very good rail connections to all the major container import ports on the South Coast, East Coast and Thames Estuary. The site will also be configured to allow good to be transferred by rail between the SRFI and other regional rail terminals.

In addition, it will also have the capability to load express rail freight, which is a market that DfT expects to grow significantly in the next few years.

There could be complimentary effects from having two SRFIs relatively close together in terms of aggregating traffic to regional rail freight terminals.

Q. *Rail explicitly did not feature in the Howdens proposals – but now Roxhill are very keen to provide a rail connected site? Why?*

- A.** The earlier, smaller development proposals (in 2014) were intended to meet the specific needs of Howdens for a new Northampton based head-quarters site. The proposals were for around 2 million sq.ft. of floorspace solely for Howdens. Howdens did not need or want a rail connection due to the nature of their operation and supply chains, which currently do not feature or have the potential for widespread use of rail freight. Therefore a rail connection and terminal was not needed and would not have been a viable component of those proposals.

In the context of an explicitly positive national policy which encourages a network of SRFIs to help meet increasing demand for rail freight, Roxhill is now keen to bring the site forward as an SRFI. The site is well placed in strategic terms with excellent access to the national road and rail networks, as well as proximity to supplies of labour.

Q. *There are sites (including brownfield sites) near Birmingham which would be more suitable for an SRFI – why not develop there instead?*

A. Government policy encourages a network of SRFIs to help meet demand, and provide the capacity needed to increase a shift towards rail freight. There are a number of other SRFIs being brought forward across the Midlands, including a site at Four Ashes near Wolverhampton, west of Junction 12 of the M6 in southern Staffordshire.

However there is very little brownfield land available anywhere in the West Midlands that could offer the capability of establishing a good quality rail connection.