

Heidi Alexander MP
Secretary of State for Transport
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Sent by way of email

Dear Secretary of State

HINCKLEY NATIONAL RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE

Firstly, we would like to congratulate you on your recent appointment.

The purpose of this letter is to draw your attention to the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange (HNRFI) application which has been submitted purporting to be a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project in Southern Leicestershire, off Junction 2 of the M69. The 662 acre development is principally located within the borders of Blaby District although a small portion lies within Hinckley and Bosworth Borough. The Applicant, Tritax Symmetry (Hinckley) Limited, is seeking a Development Consent Order (DCO) for a large controversial logistics development comprising a rail freight interchange and 850,000 square metres of warehousing.

Due to the weakness of the legislation concerning strategic rail freight interchanges there is actually no requirement for any goods to arrive or leave by rail and it was clear during the public examination that there would be a significant reliance on road transport which would have a detrimental effect on the surrounding area.

We agreed with your predecessor's stance that she was "*Minded to refuse*" the DCO, taking into account the Examining Authority's Recommendation Report, which outlined a number of concerns that ourselves, other local authorities and residents raised through the process. Most notably the following:

- the safety concerns raised in respect of the M1 J21/ M69 J3 and the lack of adequate transport modelling at this junction,
- the increased highway safety risk in Sapcote village; and
- the concerns regarding the impact on increased rail usage at Narborough Level Crossing for pedestrians; and
- a lack of measures to avoid or mitigate identified harm to the occupiers of the Aston Firs Travellers site.

Continued

However, despite these concerns the applicant has been afforded a further opportunity to attempt to overcome what are fundamental flaws in the scheme with the submission of additional information to yourself by 10th December 2024.

Whilst we and other authorities were provided with the information directly from the applicant on 10th December 2024, the new information was not available to other interested parties until well after this date, eventually being made available on 20th December 2024, some 10 days after the deadline. We do note that due to this delay the original deadline for interested parties to submit responses of 31st January 2025 has been extended to 7th February 2025,. However, this Council still has grave concerns over both the DCO itself and the nature in which the additional information has been submitted without the requirement for further independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate. This is surely against the principles in your manifesto to provide decision making at a local level and for all decisions to be made on an open and transparent basis.

Given the unified strength of concern, it would be remiss not to raise this matter with you following your recent appointment. Whilst southern Leicestershire is a key part of the Nation's logistics sector, we continue to experience significant issues in relation to the strategic highway network – most notably at the M1/M69 junction at Junction 21 of the M1. The HNRFI, by not properly addressing its own impacts, will overload this already oversaturated junction and will reduce the region's capacity for further economic growth.

We therefore urge you to carefully consider the negative social, environmental and economic impacts of the HNRFI on the residents of Blaby District, and Leicestershire as a whole, and consider the highways infrastructure mitigation that is required in this part of the region.

We hope that the recommendation provided by the examining authority and the total lack of effort on behalf of the applicant to mitigate the issues raised will lead you to reach the same conclusion as your predecessor.

This extended wait for a decision is having a material impact on local plan making but more importantly is causing a huge amount of stress to the residents in this area especially those under threat of losing their homes due to compulsory purchase.

An early decision to finally reject this proposal would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Terry Richardson
Leader - Blaby District Council



Cllr Ben Taylor
**Portfolio Holder for Planning
- Blaby District Council**